

**Yearbook:
The Historical Society
of
Fairfax County, Virginia**



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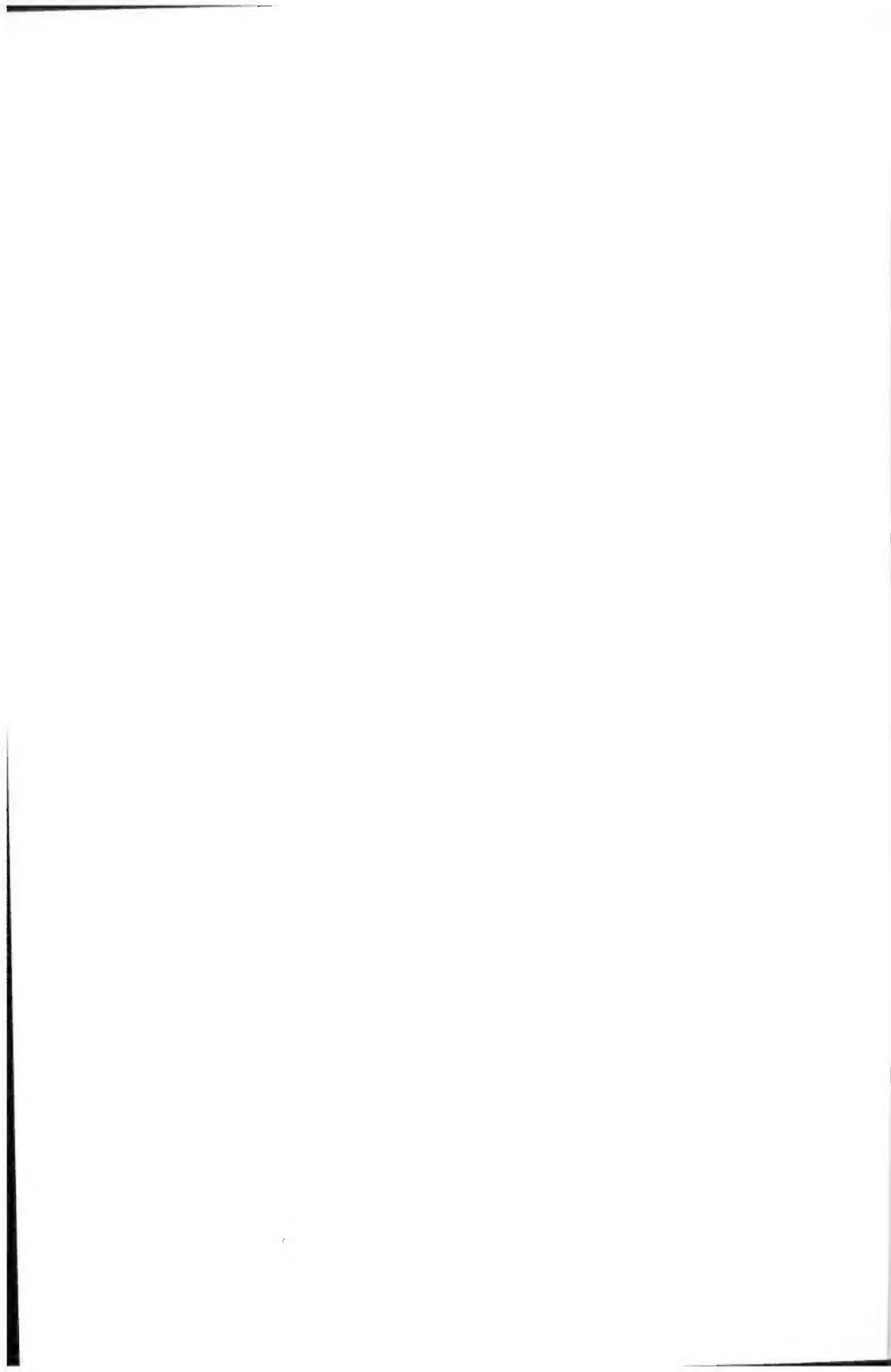
Front Cover: *Totems to Powhatan*, sculpture in wood,
by Rose Powhatan.
Vienna Metro Station, 1989. West view.

Back Cover: *Totems to Powhatan*, sculpture in wood,
by Rose Powhatan.
Vienna Metro Station, 1989. North view.

Articles appearing in this journal are abstracted and indexed in
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The Fairfax Camp:
German prisoners of war in Fairfax County
during World War II

by
Adam D. Herman
Christopher F. Jones

*This paper is a first-place winner in the
Historical Society Essay Contest, 1990*

In August 1942, the United States War Department decided to move all of its Axis prisoners of war to the United States. They were moved for many reasons, the primary one being that the Army did not want to use badly needed United States soldiers and rations in Europe to guard and care for the prisoners. By the end of the war, over 400,000 POW's were in United States prison camps throughout America.¹ Most camps were located in the southern part of the United States to save money on heating costs. All told, there were 666 documented camps across the country, consisting of 155 base camps and 511 branch camps.²

The prisoners of war were cared for according to the rules of the Geneva Convention, meaning that they received good health care, housing, and food comparable to the food that American soldiers received.³ The prisoners, made up of Germans, Italians, and a handful of Japanese, worked at first in Army-controlled industrial factories so that there would not be very much contact with civilians. However, as the war proceeded, the need to replace the labor shortage caused by two million Americans being overseas became so great that the prisoners began to work in many other areas, especially agriculture.⁴

At that time, Fairfax was the third largest dairy producing county in the country, and it was hit hard by the labor shortage.⁵ County officials decided that they had exhausted all of their other choices for forms of labor, and they decided to try to get a prisoner of war camp. After months of debate and discussion, a contract was signed with the Army to set up the camp. The Fairfax camp was set up as one of seven branch camps under the jurisdiction of the base camp in Front Royal, the other branch camps being Winchester, Flintstone (Maryland), Leesburg, Lyndhurst, Whitehall, and Timberville.⁶

Fairfax County farmers, in 1943 and earlier, received convicts to work for them from the District of Columbia and from the State Convict Road Labor Camps. One account told of the use of 65 workers from D.C. for the time period of a week, and this number apparently did not represent an isolated occurrence.⁷ This use of outside help was necessitated by a shortage of workers which began soon after America's entrance into the war.

As the war continued, more money was put in the war effort than into internal improvements, and Fairfax was no exception. By 1945 the Fairfax County road system was almost impassable in some areas. Mrs. Margaret E. Snider, a resident of Herndon, in a letter to the Board of Supervisors, described her outrage over her ordeal of getting to and from work every day. She had to "park [her] car on the hard road, a distance of a mile and a half, and walk home."⁸ The Board of Supervisors recognized "that the roads of this County [had] been so badly damaged by the freezing and thawing of the past few months" that the convicts would not be able to be transported into the county that season.⁹ Because the roads were in such a state of disrepair, the county could no longer depend on outside support to alleviate labor problems.

The number of convict laborers available was going down, due partially to the increased demand in all areas. During many of the Board of Supervisors' meetings, County Agricultural Extension Agent Lawrence S. Greene mentioned the worsening conditions. As early as June, 1944, Mr. Greene informed the Board that the county would probably not be able to obtain convict labor in 1945 and that farmers would have to depend on private sector laborers from D.C.¹⁰ He told them that "arrangements should be made, if possible, to secure war prisoners for such agricultural work on farms in the county."¹¹ In the year's report to the Board of Supervisors, Mr. Greene wrote about the "great shortage of seasonal help and also permanent help" which was "forcing dairymen out of business."¹² During the harvesting of crops late in 1944, there was an even larger demand for labor, and Mr. Greene said later that when over 200 men were needed, only 17 convicts were obtained in that period.¹³ All of these factors led Mr. Greene to decide that Fairfax County's only option was to get a prisoner of war camp to supply agricultural labor to farmers who might otherwise go out of business. This camp would not only supply the desperately needed farm workers, but would supply them at little cost and within a short traveling distance of the farms.

The county had received permission from the Army to open a POW camp in late 1944, but the permission was granted too late to open the camp in 1944, so plans were made to open a camp in 1945.¹⁴ In January Mr. Greene told the Board of Supervisors his plan for the logistics of the camp. It would probably be located in Chantilly so that it could serve Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William Counties. He expected that the camp would consist of about 200

prisoners who would work from June 1 to November 1, 1945. He also referred to the successful camp in Frederick, Maryland, which held over 100 prisoners.¹⁵ A month later Mr. Greene returned to the Board after talking to many of the county's farmers. He had determined that approximately 177 prisoners would be needed. Fauquier County had already signed a contract with the Army to run a POW camp there, and Greene reported that it would be necessary for Fairfax County to do the same.¹⁶

At the next month's meeting, the question was posed by Hugh B. Marsh, Attorney for the Commonwealth, whether or not it was within the Board of Supervisors' jurisdiction to sponsor the camp. The Board decided unanimously to request from the state the legislation which would allow them the right to sponsor the camp. State Senator Andrew W. Clarke brought the Board's resolution to an Extra Session of the General Assembly of Virginia, which determined that the county could legally support the camp with its own funds.¹⁷ In April, the Fairfax County Agricultural Cooperative Association, a group of farmers who needed labor, was formed to negotiate the contract with the United States Army. Under the system already in use in parts of the country, the farmers would pay the prisoners' wages to the Army at a base rate of 35 cents per hour. The rate was subject to change in order to cover the costs of running the POW camp.^{18a} As the project was slowly pushed through the bureaucracy, the general outlook was a good one. As with any public decision, however, the POW camp met with some opposition.

*Partial List of Farmers Indicating Interest in
Prisoner of War Labor^{18b}*

W. Alvord Sherman
Stewart Danell
Alex Haight
Johnson & Wimsatt
Hugh Sutphin
Ray Cockerille
Faust Day
Alvin Kitchen
L. M. Mitchell
Rogers & Rogers
Mrs. McMillen
W. M. Lohman
W. W. Clarke
J. B. Franklin
R. I. Arrington

G. Miller
Howard Havener
Joseph Baker
M. F. Ellmore
Milk, Inc.
[?] Hall
George Sutton
[?] Gillingham
[?] Moffet
Eddie Gerber
Claude Jenkins
Mrs. Turberville
[?] Montague
J. C. Storm
George Robey

J. Brown Smith
Solomon Costa
Ollie Clark
Wallace Carper
Granville Berry
Tom Elgin
Odin Hutchinson
[?] Davis
[?] Louk
[?] Jenkins

Chilcott brothers
Cam Sheads
Dr. Webb
H. L. Oliver
Leo Miller
[?] McCutchen
[?] Tramell
B. M. Carper
R. A. Dove
[?] Magarity

Note: "[?]" denotes unknown first name

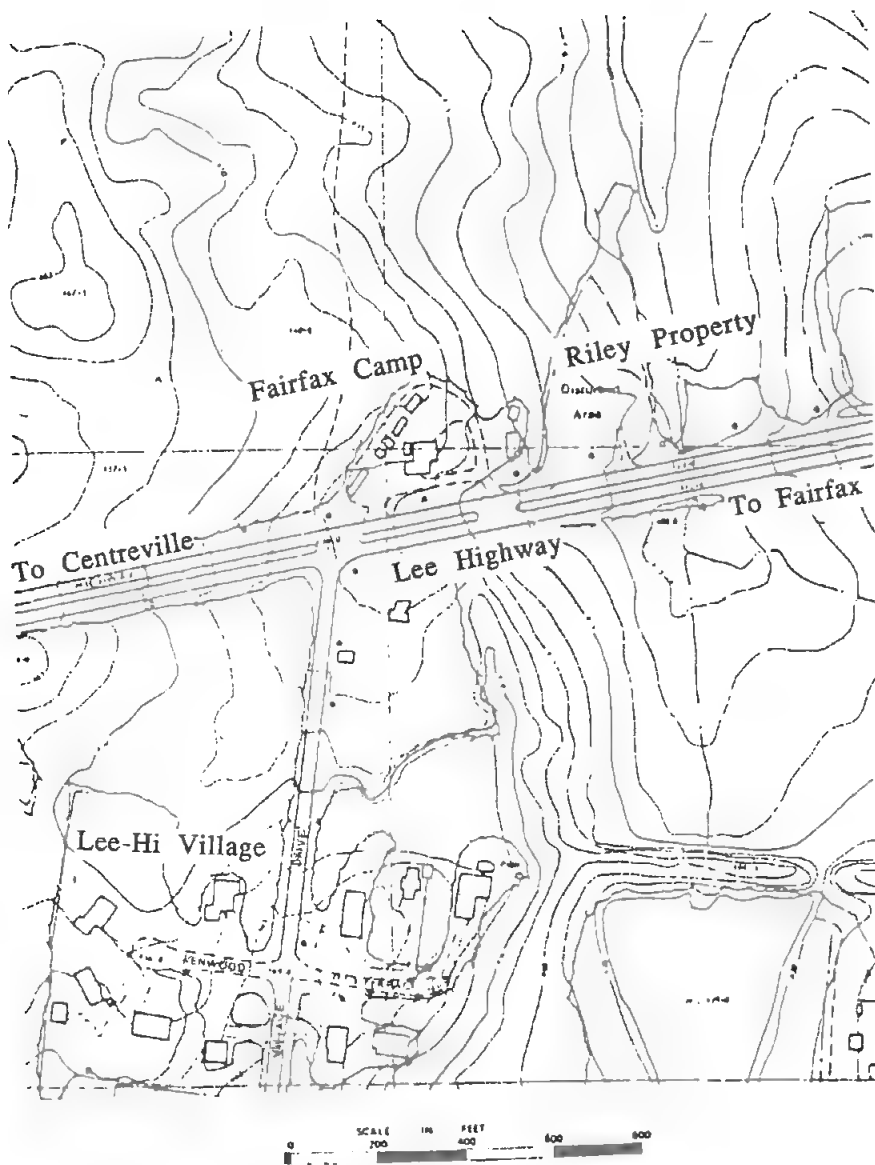
On March 26, 1945, the Zoning Administrator, H. Russell White, approved a permit which allowed the POW camp to be located on the site of the former State Road Convict Camp between Centreville and Fairfax City on the north side of Lee Highway (State Route 29), west of Shirley Gate Road.¹⁹ By choosing this location, the Board of Supervisors was trying to please everyone, but many residents who lived near the proposed site did not want the camp in their "backyard." The major opposition, in this case, came from a public appeal in the form of a petition. The petition to reverse the Zoning Administrator's decision was led by Mrs. Ethel M. Dennis, who lived in the neighborhood of Lee-Hi Village, which was located across the highway from the proposed camp site. Mrs. Dennis collected over 60 signatures on her petition, which asserted that Mr. White did not have the right to re-zone the site and place the POW camp in their "backyard." Mrs. Dennis' appeal was heard before the Zoning Appeals Board on May 14, 1945.²⁰

The main fear of the signers of the petition was for their own safety. They believed that the prisoners would not be guarded well enough; they had seen other camps in the area at which there did not seem to be a sufficient number of guards. They had also observed an apparently lax attitude toward the guarding of the prisoners on the part of the guards.²¹ Mrs. Dennis went so far as to say that the "camp was a menace to the community."²² There had been reports of escape from camps in other parts of the country and in Canada, and the residents feared that their lives would be put in undue danger with a POW camp across the street from where they lived.²³ R. F. Riley lived on the lot adjacent to the proposed camp so he also worried about escapes. One of the petition's signers, Karl O. Spiess, proposed that the camp be closer to the actual farms on which the POW's would be working, since the immediate vicinity of the camp contained very little agricultural land.²⁴ Charles Pickett, who was representing an estate in the area, brought up his concern that the land values would decrease if such a camp were built.²⁵ These complaints were ones that the county would have to consider very carefully.

In response, Mr. Greene explained the county's side of the argument and tried to allay some of the residents' fears. He said that their worries were unfounded, because the prisoners posed them virtually no threat. He told the signers of the petition that the guards in the camp to which they had referred were not inexperienced. Two of the guards "up there [had] spent twenty-six months overseas" working at prison camps. "They know something about handling prisoners."²⁶ He also informed the petitioners that there would be very little risk of escape from the camp. The stories they had read, Mr. Greene said, were about very high-risk prisoners who were kept in camps in isolated areas of the country, such as Arizona and New Mexico. These prisoners knew English very well and could blend into society easily, whereas the prisoners in the Fairfax camp would only be low level "buck privates."²⁷ Mr. Greene went on to describe the compound as only "four hundred and some feet long by two hundred and some feet wide" and surrounded by multiple fences and barbed wire.²⁸ He said that the residents of Lee-Hi Village had nothing to worry about, because if the prisoners wanted to escape, they would do so while they were out on the farms. Mr. White later pointed out that the prisoners would be much worse off if they tried to escape; they would inevitably be caught, and then they would lose many of the privileges that they had, which included housing, good food, health care, and only limited security.²⁹ The camp, although it was not very close to any large agricultural area, was centrally located in that workers would have to be transported to many places in all parts of the county. As a final argument in favor of the camp, Mr. Greene reminded the residents that Fairfax County was not going to get any convict labor in 1945, and that the camp was the only hope to keep many farmers in business.³⁰ Help was needed, and the proposed camp was the only way to fill that need.

The Zoning Appeals Board upheld Mr. White's decision to allow the camp. Mrs. Dennis and five of her neighbors decided to appeal the Board's decision to the Board of Supervisors, which, realizing Fairfax County's desperate labor situation, again decided in favor of Mr. White on June 6, 1945.³¹ The prisoners arrived a week later.

The site that was chosen for the Fairfax camp was the former State Road Convict Camp on what is now Route 29, Lee Highway. The camp was situated approximately one mile west of the Fairfax City line on the north side of the highway, across from Village Drive. The Fairfax County Agricultural Cooperative Association signed a contract to lease the land to the Army for the duration of the war and six months afterwards.³² The first German prisoners of war arrived on June 13, 1945, and the last ones left on November 16, after a period of just over five months. At its peak, the camp was the third largest of Front Royal's seven branches, with 199 prisoners.³³ It is of interest to note that this entire period took place after the German surrender on May 7, 1945.



United States Geological Survey, Topographical Map of Fairfax
Quadrangle, Section 56-2

Map of the camp and the surrounding area, as surveyed in 1972.

The camp had two entrances, one directly across from Village Drive, and one about 200 feet east toward Fairfax. The compound consisted of at least seven structures to house and care for the POW's.³⁴ For most of the prisoners, the camp was just a place to eat and sleep at night, because the majority were out working on the farms all day. Some prisoners did work inside the camp, however, performing needed services and Army-assigned tasks. From the day of their arrival, the prisoners helped to alleviate the labor shortage by working on various farms throughout the county.

The prisoners worked for 196 different farmers throughout the five month period.³⁵ One of these farms was Alex Haight's dairy farm, located on Route 123, Ox Road, in Fairfax Station, the present location of the Fairfax Country Club. An interview with Mr. Haight's nephew, John Hamill, provided the story of the prisoners of war from the viewpoint of a farmer. Every morning, the prisoners would be dropped off at the farm. No Army guards stayed with them; the farmers were in charge of the prisoners while they were at the farm. The farmers did not have much say in how many workers they received; they told the camp how many they needed, but they had to be satisfied with what they got. There were not enough workers for all of the farms, and the farmers knew that getting a few workers was better than not getting any at all. The prisoners were usually grouped in crews, and a farmer would see the same crew only two or three times a week in order to prevent him from becoming too friendly with the prisoners.³⁶

The prisoners, according to Mr. Hamill, were hard workers, but unfortunately, most of them were "city boys" who had never worked on farms before. Since almost all of them only spoke German, their instruction had to be done by showing them how to farm instead of telling them. Mr. Hamill recalled that there was one prisoner who was fluent in German, English and French. This prisoner was helpful, because he could be told the instructions in English and relate them to the other workers in their own language.³⁷

The Army set down a policy of nonfraternization between the farmers and the prisoners, which meant that the farmers could not talk with them other than to give instructions, and that the farmers could only give the prisoners water, no food. Many farmers, however, ignored these rules, simply because they discovered that the Germans were basically the same type of people as they were. The prisoners did not want to escape—they just wanted to pass the time quickly until they returned home. Mr. Hamill said that his uncle would often let the prisoners come into the house for lunch. The prisoners were very grateful for the kindness of the Haight's, and they liked to come back to work there because they were treated so well.³⁸ Generally, the workers did not mind going out to work because it was a change of pace; it broke up the monotony.³⁹ Also, work allowed them to earn small wages in the form of canteen coupons, which they could turn in for various items back at the camp.⁴⁰

There were hardly any problems with the prisoners, besides their not knowing what to do. Almost all of the farmers were grateful for the extra labor, but a few tried to push their luck a little too far. Mr. Hamill told of one farmer who tried to overwork the prisoners. The farmer apparently told the prisoners that they had to cut a certain number of shocks of corn per day, but he increased the standard dimensions for the shocks. A standard shock was eighteen rows by eighteen rows, but this farmer told the prisoners to cut areas twenty-four rows square. When the Army found out about what he was doing, they did not send him any more laborers from the camp.⁴¹

In general, the farmers liked having the prisoners working on their farms, even if it was a little difficult to teach them to do everything correctly. The prisoners did not mind working either; they even got a few benefits out of it: wages, physical activity, relative freedom, and an occasional lunch from a farmer. At the Haight farm, the farmers and prisoners got along very well, which meant that plenty of work got done in a time of crisis for the farmers. Overall, the prisoner of war labor on the farms had a beneficial effect on the productivity of the harvest and on the attitudes of the prisoners and farmers toward each other.

The Fairfax camp was run by the United States Army under the command of Captain Lewis Lundy, Commanding Officer, and First Lieutenant Vaughn Smith, Police and Prison Officer.⁴² When the first prisoners arrived on June 13, there were 155 enlisted men and one noncommissioned officer. From mid-June through mid-July, the number of men remained around 150. The camp continued to increase its numbers until it reached its capacity of 199 in September. By that time, there were about nine noncommissioned officers and 190 enlisted men.⁴³

The prisoners were sent out to 196 farms around the county. On average, they worked about two thousand man-days per month in the first few months, and about three thousand man-days per month by the time the camp had reached capacity.⁴⁴ The prisoners, from June to November, worked a total of 111,000 hours and harvested 3500 shocks of corn. Mr. Greene, in reference to the camp, said that "taken as a whole, the camp was very successful."⁴⁵

On November 16, 1945, all seven of Front Royal's branch camps were cleared out, and the prisoners were sent to Camp Shanks, New York, from which they were eventually sent back to Germany.⁴⁶ Thus ended the short but productive stay of German prisoners of war in Fairfax County.

The camp itself, however, remained standing until the mid-1970's, when it was torn down. All that remains are a few old concrete cinder blocks and an area of muddy paths carved out by dirtbike riders.

What would seem to be an important landmark in the history of Fairfax County has been all but forgotten by most historians. The opposition to the camp put forth by Mrs. Dennis and her neighbors turned out to be a

completely mistaken impression of the German prisoners, and the benefits of having the prisoners here vastly outweighed any possible harmful effects that Fairfax County could have suffered. The German prisoners of war performed a service to the county when its farmers were in a period of desperate need, and they should be remembered as such.

The authors would like to thank Mayo Stuntz, John Hamill, and the staff of the Virginia Room, Fairfax City Regional Library, for all of their time and effort.

C.F.J.

A.D.H.

Notes

¹ Ronald H. Bailey and the editors of Time-Life Books, *Prisoners of War*. Alexandria, Va., 1981:142.

² Ibid:158.

³ Ibid:142.

⁴ Ibid:160.

⁵ Fairfax County Board of Supervisors (FBOS), *Minute Book*, v.14:50, March 7, 1945.

⁶ Provost Marshal General, *Report of Inspection of Prisoner of War Camp*. September 18, 1945. Record Group 389, Box 2661, National Archives.

⁷ Lawrence S. Greene, *Narrative Report of Extension Work for Fairfax County, Va. from December 1st, 1942 to November 30, 1943*:8-9.

⁸ Margaret E. Snider to Supervisor Fox. Letter dated March 2, 1945.

⁹ FBOS, op. cit.

¹⁰ FBOS, op. cit. v.12:390. June 7, 1944.

¹¹ FBOS, op. cit. v.12:502. December 6, 1944.

¹² Greene, op. cit. December 1, 1943 to November 30, 1944:9.

¹³ Fairfax County Board of Zoning Appeals. Transcript of hearing May 14, 1945:24.

¹⁴ Greene, op. cit. December 1, 1943 to November 30, 1944:9.

^{14a} FBOS, op. cit. v.14:84. April 4, 1945.

^{14b} Zoning Appeals hearing, op. cit:55-57.

¹⁹ FBOS, op. cit. v.14:143. June 6, 1945.

²⁰ Fairfax County Board of Zoning Appeals, *Minutes*. May 14, 1945.

²¹ Zoning Appeals hearing, op. cit:7.

²² FBOS, op. cit. v.14:143. June 6, 1945.

²³ Zoning Appeals hearing, op. cit:15.

²⁴ Ibid:13.

²⁵ Ibid:14.

²⁶ Ibid:22.

- ²⁷ Ibid:22.
- ²⁸ Ibid:22.
- ²⁹ Ibid:46.
- ³⁰ Ibid:27.
- ³¹ FBOS, op. cit. v.14:143. June 6, 1945.
- ³² Greene, op. cit. December 1, 1944 to November 30, 1945:9.
- ³³ Provost Marshal General, *Prisoners of War Strength Reports*. October 16, 1945. Record Group 389, Box 2707, National Archives.
- ³⁴ United States Geological Survey, *Topographical Map of Fairfax Quadrangle*, Section 56-2. Survey and Design, Inc., comp., March 1972.
- ³⁵ Greene, op. cit. December 1, 1944 to November 30, 1945:9.
- ³⁶ John Hamill, farmer and nephew of Alexander Haight, owner of dairy farm in Fairfax Station, personal interview, June 1, 1990.
- ³⁷ Ibid.
- ³⁸ Ibid.
- ³⁹ John Hammond Moore, "Hitler's Wehrmacht in Virginia." *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, v.85:259-273, 1977.
- ⁴⁰ Bailey, op. cit:148-151.
- ⁴¹ Hamill, op. cit.
- ⁴² Provost Marshal General, *Officer Roster/Army Service Forces Headquarters*. September 18, 1945. Record Group 389, Box 2661, National Archives.
- ⁴³ Provost Marshal General, *Prisoner of War Camp Labor Report*. June 15-November 15, 1945. Record Group 389, Box 2661, National Archives.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid.
- ⁴⁵ Greene, op. cit. December 1, 1944 to November 30, 1945:9.
- ⁴⁶ Provost Marshal General, *Prisoners of War Strength Reports*. November 30, 1945. Record Group 389, Box 2708, National Archives.

We're Still Here:

Pamunkey John Watson Mills/Miles: his life and family in Fairfax County

by

Georgia Mills Jessup

Ms. Jessup is a Washington area artist, the thirteenth of eighteen children of Joseph Mills of McLean, Virginia. She received her Bachelor of Fine Arts from Howard University and her Master's from Catholic University. She has taught painting, ceramics, sculpture, crafts and doll-making in Washington area schools, was artist-in-residence at the Anacostia Museum, and art director of the District of Columbia public schools from 1976 to 1980. She has won numerous awards, is listed in art directories and catalogues, and had many one-person and group shows. One of her paintings hangs in the permanent collection of the National Museum of Women in the Arts. Her murals are in the permanent collection of the Anacostia Museum and in many private collections. Her daughters Rose and Marsha are both award-winning artists. Sons Juvaquin and Miklos are professional musicians. In this article, Ms. Jessup tells the story of her Virginia Indian heritage which has so greatly influenced her work and that of her daughter Rose whose Totems to Powhatan appear on the covers of this book.

January rains have washed away the icy crusts of snow from those treacherous cliffs on the Virginia side of the Potomac where my brothers Eddie, Marshall, and I stood snagging fish when the herring were running in the spring of 1940.

Drenching rains have failed to wash away the history and names of those original fishermen who stood on those same rocks many centuries ago. Their names are still on our rivers and their descendants are still here.

Before the land was named Virginia, it was Attan Akamik meaning "our fertile country." Some Native Americans today call it Turtle Island. Descendants of the Dogue, Mattaponi, Pamunkey, Rappahannock, Chickahominy, and other tribes of Virginia are still here.



John Watson Mills, son of Pamunkey Indian Mary Frances Miles (Mills), grandfather of Georgia Mills Jessup.

John Watson Miles (Mills) was born in Hanover, King William County, Virginia, in 1847 to Mary Frances Miles and James Crouch. It was often the custom for children of Indian women to carry the mother's surname. Mary Frances was the daughter of the Pamunkey Indian headman (chief) Isaac Miles and his wife Nannie Custalow Miles. The Pamunkeys and the village of the same name were the main seat of the Powhatan Chiefdom. King William County land records show Mills land (and Mills family including John Watson Mills, age 3 in 1850) near Aylett and Rt. 30 on the Pamunkey River, a tract of 110 acres called Pigeon Hill. The land was deeded to Edward Mills by his uncle Captain Daniel Miles (spelled Mills, Myles, and Miels) a trustee of

Delaware Town, or De La Warr Town, now called West Point.¹ The land was originally owned by Opechancanough, Powhatan's half brother.

John Watson Mills was fifteen years old when he had a ringside seat for the War Between the States. He was on the banks of the Pamunkey River when the U.S.S. Currituck slithered past Pamunkey shores on May 17, 1862; when African and Indian slaves were fleeing north on barges, leaving those who would have made them servants for life. He saw the bridge that spanned the Pamunkey River go up in flames; blood brothers being drafted by Confederate troops as Indian scouts and navigators for sixteen bits a day and hardtack; and Pamunkey hero Terrell Bradby escape the Confederate officer who lined up seven Pamunkey men in chains and led them up Miles Lane on the reservation to jail for helping the Union soldiers and fleeing slaves.²

Family historians tell the story of grandfather John leaving his home in King William County in the early 1870's in anger, walking all the way from the Aylett district to Fairfax, land of the Dogues, Powhatan's last frontier, near the rocks where my brothers and I stood that spring of 1940.³ He carried his small, black leather-tooled Bible in his back pocket. John was crafty, independent, and determined, existing for weeks in snake-infested swamps and woods on a diet of fish, frogs, muskrats, squirrels, roots and chinquapins.⁴ In earlier days he had managed to avoid both Union and Confederate drafts of Virginia Indians, never allowing himself to be kidnapped into Indian slavery that was widespread in King William during his youth. Why did he leave his home in Aylett? Why in anger? The answers to these questions still elude his descendants.

One hundred years before John's departure from Aylett there had been a similar migration. Mary, a daughter of William Aylett of Aylett, Virginia, left that place destined for marriage in Fairfax County to Thomas, 9th Lord Fairfax, the first of his three wives.⁵ Though Mary and John left the same place, came to the same place and became connected to the same person, their modes of transportation differed: Mary traveled in a fine carriage with perhaps two footmen; John walked all the way on his two feet.

Like many Virginia Indians living away from the reservations, John saw many changes in his racial classification before he died in Fairfax County in 1923 and was buried in the Pleasant Grove churchyard. Indians were called Indian as long as they remained on reservations. When they left, they were called fringe Indians, mulatto or mulatta, colored, negro and black. John married Martha Loretta Goings in Fairfax County July 18, 1876.⁶ On the marriage certificate, the bride and groom were designated "Black." Christopher Mills, John's brother, married, at age 65, in King William County in 1908. His marriage record shows him as Indian. In the words of a Mattaponi philosopher, John and Martha "got called out of their race."

Martha was the grand-daughter of Bethia Fairfax. Bethia, born 1801, was reputed to be the mestiza daughter of Thomas Fairfax. Bethia's children, George, Thomas, Rose, Ann, Amelia (Milly) and others, inherited twenty-five acres which Bethia purchased May 17, 1846 from Sarah Ambrose one month after Thomas Fairfax died.⁷ Sarah had inherited the land from William Gunnell who had died in 1822.⁸ Sarah, like Bethia, was called a free person of color, though it is likely that both were mestizas, offspring of a caucasian and an Indian. The land was on Hunter's Mill Road near Vienna.

Milly married Lewis Goings and lived in a log cabin fifty yards from Spring Hill Road, backed by Bull Neck Run.⁹ Her daughter Martha, my grandmother, recalled the nightly sounds of hoofbeats and gunshots and muffled voices of soldiers traveling through the woods behind the cabin during the Civil War. She also remembered scrawny slave children in gunnysacks and diapers, their hunger camouflaged by mouths well-greased by their masters to make them appear well-fed to those hiring their services for the day.¹⁰

When John and Martha married, they lived in the log cabin with her parents until the cabin burned and the family moved to six acres on Spring Hill Road.¹¹ They built a six-room frame house with outhouses and a well. Electricity was not available. The Mills' four children were born there: Rose, Joseph, Edward, and Lucy, Pamunkey names. John was illiterate. He had refused to go to school in King William because the school he would have to attend was for "colored." Martha was educated. She taught her four children, and later her grand-children, the three R's and was a substitute teacher at the all-white Carper school.¹² Martha offered the same opportunity to her husband. John had been a farmer, a mill worker, a carpenter, fisherman, and lay preacher. He helped found the Pleasant Grove Church with three members of the Sharper family and William Hatcher, William Harris, and Henry Eskridge, a descendant of Swink slaves. John split the logs that for many years supported the floor of the Pleasant Grove Church. My first cousins, Baldeagle and Newcomer Boston, sons of Lucy, still own the tools John used to help build the church.

John and Martha's son Joseph, my father, married Evangeline Watts. They produced eleven children and lived with his parents until John and Martha died. Evangeline later died in childbirth. In the early 1920's, Joseph built another home on Little Falls Road where he lived with his second wife, my mother, Margaret Hall. Their property was bounded by Swink's Mill, Lewinsville Road, and Jones Corner to the south. Neighbors were Leslie Kelly, the Elgins, the Swinks and the Beyers who later bought most of the Mills property. Margaret, red-haired and freckled, was the daughter of William Henry Hall and Susan Nelson.¹³ With Margaret, my father had seven more children.



Georgia Mills Jessup with Totems to Powhatan wood sculpture by her daughter Rose Powhatan, Vienna Metro Station, 1989.

The house on Little Falls Road was a six-room frame dwelling with porches on two sides, wellwater, outhouses and still no electricity. One of the workmen who helped build the house, Mr. Carter, often complained that the family still owed him money for his services, although he never completed the task. The house was never finished. One of my brothers, four years old at the time, tried to cook popcorn under an upstairs bed and burned the place down. My older brother Robert discovered the four-year-old popcorn cooker, saved him, and everyone exited safely. My oldest sister Ginny bemoaned the loss of savings she was keeping in a trunk. Grandma Martha's antique Jumeau dolls, family Bible, old letters, daguerreotypes, recipes, and blue cloth-bound McGuffey Readers were also lost in the blaze.

Three siblings, Ginny, Joseph, and John Henry moved into the two-room utility building next to the burnt dwelling. Others went to live with relatives and friends. Some moved temporarily to Chesterbrook, sharing one of two houses owned by Margaret's parents, William Henry and Susan Hall. This property was part of the dairy farm of Margaret's grandfather Columbus Hall whose twenty-five acres were divided among his eleven children with William Henry receiving 3.48 acres.¹⁴ Eventually the Mills family moved together to Georgetown, D.C.

I was barely two years old when my uncle Granville Delano Hall took me on horseback from the burning site to grandma Susan Hall's spacious Victorian farmhouse in Chesterbrook, now McLean. The three-story farmhouse was one of the largest and best-kept homes in Chesterbrook at that time. There were large porches on each story and on all sides with the corbels and fretwork typical of Victorian architecture. The "pump porch" on the right side adjacent to the kitchen for convenience was shared by neighbors lacking pumps or wells on their property. I remember the fun I had jumping up and down trying to pump water. I was too small to raise the handle high enough to fill the tin long-handled water dipper. I also remember wondering why we were not allowed to cook popcorn in Granny's house like other families often did, and why the only popcorn we saw was already cooked and in a box called Cracker Jacks.

The kitchen was heated by a deluxe model wood-burning range called Home Comfort. The stove was used for cooking and had a warmer at the top to keep food hot as well as a side attachment to store a tank of hot water used for bathing. I watched my mother mix large batches of beaten biscuits in that kitchen and remember her offering me clumps of the sticky biscuit dough so that I could make dough sculptures shaped like birds or dolls. I recall how dingy my creations became after much modeling and remodeling of the shapes with my small grimy hands. Years later in 1969 those same hands would earn an M.F.A. degree in ceramics and sculpture from Catholic

University, using some of the same techniques employed in the biscuit sculptures of my childhood days.

The Chesterbrook home had a porch-room on the left side of the kitchen that held an assortment of galvanized tubs used for laundry and Saturday baths. Daily bathing was done in the Sears Roebuck oaken washstands outfitted with ironstone water pitchers with matching water basins that were placed in each bedroom. These old commodes are prized antiques today. There was electricity in the house but no plumbing. There were outhouses situated near lilac bushes where old Sears catalogs substituted for Waldorf and Charmin and Cottonelle. The lilac blossoms served as air fresheners and anti-pollutants in the days before exhaust fans, room-deodorants and standard inside plumbing came to local farmhouses in Chesterbrook.

Susan Hall was widowed at an early age when her husband, my grandfather William Henry Hall, died in his sleep at age 45. He had traveled by horseback that day from church to church performing his duties as Sunday School superintendant for several Fairfax County Baptist churches. The strenuous routine took its toll on his existing cardiac condition that night.

Susan continued to raise her family of ten: Bertha, Edna, Maria, Margaret, Phoebe, Frederick, Granville, James, Lewis, and Minor, all deceased now. During their lifetimes, Susan's sons helped maintain the farm with the help of three hired hands: Mr. Carrington whom I saw my pregnant, freckled-faced mother slap backwards down a flight of basement stairs for daring to argue with grandma Susan during a pay dispute; uncle Grant Lucas who outlived everyone; Vernon, an adopted youth who yodeled as he worked and taught me to do the same.

Grandma earned money by taking in homeless and sometimes incorrigible girls assigned by the Board of Guardians of the District of Columbia. I recollect how one of those unfortunate girls tried to put pillows over my sister Phoebe's face and mine in an isolated upstairs room while grandma was busy doing farm chores. We overpowered her and she left us alone, locked in the room. Uncle Fred's wife, Aunt Ida, discovered our plight when she spied me from her home across the road, Cottonwood Street today. She saw me holding on to the wooden shutters attached to the window I had managed to climb out of. The teenaged offender was reprimanded and eventually returned to the agency from which she came.

Additional income came from the school teachers who were boarded in the summers and came to get fresh air and country cooking. Miss Quander from Washington schools was a frequent guest, as well as young Mercer Ellington, the musician son of the famous jazz musician and composer Duke Ellington. I don't recall Mercer playing the piano in my grandmother's parlor as he was only a boy at the time and I was even younger. There was a

M. Cable piano in the spotless off-limits room that we called the parlor. There grandma kept her mahogany four-tiered what-not cabinet that displayed porcelain Heubach figurines brought from Germany by her son James when he was a soldier in World War I, Royal Bayreuth collectibles, and assorted demi-tasse cups. My mother and her siblings took piano lessons each Saturday as children under instruction from Miss Florence Vessels, a proper old maid with a cast eye and spectacles balanced on the end of her nose. She still visited the farmhouse on weekends after all her students were grown, coming all the way from the District of Columbia to partake of Susan Hall's homemade shortbread-style strawberry shortcake. Aunt Phoebe taught piano in Chesterbrook to other students including some of the Sharpers. Mom sang and danced and gave church recitals in Falls Church at Hall's Hill on Lee Highway and performed for troops in World War I.

Sunday breakfasts consisted of smoked country ham slices in red-eye gravy (sauce from the ham juices left after frying), fresh eggs from Rhode Island Red or Checker hens, lyonnaise potatoes, rolls or biscuits with homemade preserves from the damson plum trees in the yard, and plenty of fresh milk from the cows on the farm. The meals were served on long tables and we sat on hand-hewn benches in the dining room in the basement, an enclosure of white-washed fieldstone walls with small windows. On Sundays we listened to prayer services and sang a hymn before we were allowed to touch a fork, spoon, or biscuit. When the ritual ended, the red-eye gravy was cold. Those too hungry to wait could partake of pots of clabber (congealed milk like yogurt served with sugar or fresh berry toppings) that always stood on the stove warmer.

Sunday evenings my jovial great-uncle Chris Hall would visit our house and sample Susan Hall's homemade vanilla or peach ice cream. Sunday nights grandma sat in her wicker rocking chair on the front porch while her grandchildren entertained her with spontaneous song or dance routines and sometimes country guitar music. This was before TV and Ed Sullivan and his really big shows.

I remember hiding under the apple trees in the orchard behind the house eating green apples, while ignoring the dinner bell and my mother's voice calling my cousin Edward and me to come to dinner. We helped feed the hogs and ran from the capon chickens who chased us for more chicken feed. Edward and I tried to plant corn with Uncle Lewis and roamed the woods and streams looking for Indian arrowheads or unusual rocks near Bryan's Branch behind our farmhouse. (Bryan's Branch is the small stream that runs along the access road on the Hall property that leads to the Highland Swim Club in Potomac Hills). On December 1st, 1942 the branch was dammed so that the First Baptist Church of Chesterbrook could use it for baptising converts. My mother ordered me to be baptised that day or not come home anymore. In

the icy waters I struggled to resist the two deacons who, standing on either side of me, decided to dunk me three times, almost drowning me, a non-swimmer and non-believer at that time. My gurgling, water-filled throat, coupled with my "cussing" under my breath, made noises that the spectators interpreted as sounds of "feeling the spirit." I stumbled ashore on that cold day, clad only in the water-logged flannel gown worn for the ordeal. (Baptism was done in cold weather to avoid water moccasins that came out when the weather was warm). This terrifying induction into official Christendom is the reason I am a Zen practitioner today. I have a great reverence for Mother Nature and get much inspiration from the world I live in and the people around me. I express my beliefs by "feeling the spirit" with my paintbrush and palette.

Winter evenings in Chesterbrook Susan Hall sat in her favorite rocker by the oval Acme sheet-metal stove making crazy quilts from heavy scraps of old clothing, wool, velvet and satin. She used yellow silk thread and feather-stiches to connect her finished strips of multicolored cloth. My assignment included cutting small satin and rayon circles for the pouf coverlets she made for the guest room beds. During one of those winter quilting sessions I suffered a minor burn to one leg when I leaned too close to the red-hot stove. I was observing the red-orange translucent images that I saw through the thin walls of the glowing hot range. Since those evenings long ago, I have made my own family history quilt.

Each workday after school my brother Marshall would spread sheets of schoolwork on the floor of the upstairs front porch and teach me what he had learned that day at school. He was six at the time and extremely intelligent beyond his years. I was not old enough to attend school. One day we spent hours examining the iridescent colors in a packet of butterfly wings that we lined up on the porch floor, marveling at the jewel-like tones.

Sometimes my mother Margaret took me to work with her to the beauty parlor she operated in Washington. I remember standing in biting cold weather waiting for the Old Dominion trolley car in Chesterbrook to take us to Rosslyn. Those winters were so cold that breathing was difficult and my lips turned blue before the trolley arrived.

My mother's cousin Martha Hall and six other women worked in the hair salon called Apex No. 1. I ran errands to the sandwich shop and ice cream store for the shop workers. Other times I sat in the waiting room drawing pictures and looking at magazines. Occasionally my mother used me in her demonstrations to instruct other operators in wet-on-wet finger-waving, a French hair fad in the 1930's. Sometimes I watched my mother giving ultra-violet electrical hair treatments to customers who wanted longer hair. The customer sat holding what appeared to be a glass rolling pin that was plugged into a 110 volt circuit. This was supposed to stimulate hair growth.

The sizzling static and crackling sounds of the electricity passing through the hair made the hair grow but many left the operator's chair with sore scalps and lots of hope, and maybe an overdose of radiation, too.

Some Hallowe'en seasons I sat in the plate glass storefront window of Pandora's Costume Shop next door to the Apex No. 1 beauty shop. I was instructed to sit perfectly still, dressed as a gypsy and acting as a store mannequin. It was dangerous to move because I could have bumped my head on the plate glass window.

I was like a mascot to my uncle Granville who always took me along in his red Ford roadster, even on dates, but the uncle who exposed me to art before I was school age was my mother's frail, artistic brother Fred Hall. Because of a debilitating respiratory condition, he could perform only light chores on the farm. Some Sunday mornings he used his front porch at the smaller house next to our farmhouse as a barbershop. He spent his spare time painting, drawing, whittling, and carving small sculptures from peach seeds, as his father William had done when he was young. Otrich Sharper Costley of McLean gave me a monkey carved by my grandfather from a peach seed and presented to Otrich's mother by my grandfather when they were teenagers, over one hundred years ago. I treasure the carving, although I never saw the grandfather who made it. I wonder if he passed those creative genes to his many descendants, as wood-carving is one of my favorite art mediums.

I have made and sold large wood sculptures to many private collectors in the past and even bought one of those back from the estate of a well-known collector, Helen Beale. It was sold at Sloan's auction house in Washington after Mrs. Beale died. Marshall, my brother, inherited some of those carving genes, too. He made a sculpture "Plunkin Sam from Alabam" that was photographed and reviewed in the now defunct *Washington Daily News*.

Joseph's Bible name means "he shall add" . . . and maybe multiply, too. Joseph produced nine boys and nine girls, eleven of whom are still living in 1991. He supported his "tribe" through postal work, farming, carpentry, two laundromats, and his famous concoction made from corn, rye, barley and other natural ingredients sometimes ground at Colvin's Mill. His friends Eppa Kirby, Henry MacGarity, and the restaurateurs at a popular Georgetown Hotel in the 1930's extolled the virtues of his recipes.

John Watson Mills claimed no doctors or lawyers in his line, but it did include at least three Indian chiefs. His "tribe" includes more than two hundred persons living today, twenty-nine of whom are supporting themselves through the creative, visual, literary and performing arts. They include art educators, artists, fashion designers, a medical illustrator, photographers and journalists, musicians, engineers, city planners, hospital

administrators, school counselors and teachers, postal workers, a linguist, and a female marathon runner.

There are unsolved mysteries, too. When my daughter Rose was married, her great-aunt Lucy M. Boston insisted that she wear a blue-enamelled gold locket that was supposed to have been given to Bethia Fairfax's daughter Milly by the Prince of Wales when he visited Lord Thomas Fairfax. The locket was inherited by Lucy. The locket and other pieces of the Fairfax jewelry mysteriously disappeared from Lucy's safe deposit box in a McLean bank shortly after her death in 1969.

Who was Bethia, sometimes called Elizabeth Fairfax? Was she really the natural daughter of Thomas, 9th Lord Fairfax? Who was her mother? Where is Bethia buried? Why was her daughter Milly given jewelry by that prominent visitor? What was the source of John's anger? What more can we learn about his father, James Crouch?

His tribe is still searching for answers. We're STILL HERE!

Editors' note: the poem Indian Names by Lydia Sigourney (1791-1865) cited in H. L. Mencken's The American Language, p. 528, is reproduced, in part, here:

Ye say they have all passed away
That noble race and brave
That their light canoes have vanished
From off the crested wave;
That mid the forests where they roamed
There rings no hunters shout;
But their name is on your waters;
Ye may not wash it out.

Their memory lieth on your hills,
Their baptism on your shore.
Your everlasting rivers speak
Their dialect of yore.

Below is a very brief list of publications which might interest the reader.

Philip L. Barbour, *Pocahontas and Her World*. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1970.

Elizabeth Stuart Gray, "West Point's History Begins Almost With the Founding of the Nation." Program Souvenir Booklet for the 250th anniversary of the founding of King William County, Thursday, April 24, 1952. Reprinted in *Tidewater Review*, April 26, 1952.

Frances Mossiker, *Pocahontas, The Life and the Legend*. Knopf, New York, 1976.

Helen C. Roundtree, *Pocahontas' People*. University of Oklahoma Press, 1990.

Theodore Stern, "Pamunkey Pottery Making." *Southern Indian Studies*, v.III, 1951.

"A True Relation of King and Queen County in Virginia to the Year 1790." Reprint of articles published in the *Virginia Gazette*. Published by the County Commission in connection with the celebration of the 350th anniversary of Virginia's founding at Jamestown, 1957(?).

J. Leitch Wright, Jr., *The Only Land They Knew; the tragic story of the American Indians in the Old South*. The Free Press, 1981.

Emily J. Salmon, editor. *A Hornbook of Virginia History*, third edition. Virginia State Library, Richmond, 1983.

Notes

¹ King William County Deed Book 1:366; 16 pt.2:421; 25:14, 50, 52.

² Thomas J. Blumer, Ph.D., "The Pamunkey:" May-July, 1862. *Tidewater Review*, December 31, 1886:4-7, West Point, Virginia.

³ The 1870 Virginia Census placed John Watson Mills in King William County. In 1876 he married in Fairfax County.

⁴ Oral tradition.

⁵ King William County Deed Book 3. Deed dated October 12, 1799, recorded February 24, 1806, from Thomas 9th Lord Fairfax to wife Mary's sisters Ann and Rebecca, daughters of William Aylett . . .

⁶ Marriage license, Fairfax Circuit Court Archives.

⁷ Fairfax County Deed Book M₃:23.

Fairfax County Deed Book Y₄:198, 200, 201.

⁸ Fairfax County Will Book M:423.

⁹ The 1870 Virginia Census listed Lewis Goings as a 43-year-old mulatto.

¹⁰ Recollection of Joseph Fairfax Mills, oldest living grandson of Martha Loretta Goings Mills.

¹¹ Fairfax County Deed Book D₅:3.

¹² Carper School was ten yards from the end of Spring Hill Road, north side of Georgetown Pike.

¹³ Margaret was listed in the 1900 Virginia Census as a 4-year-old mulatta.

¹⁴ Chancery Pending File #29, *Hall vs. Hall* (1917). Fairfax Circuit Court Archives.

The Daniel French Families and Their Lands

by

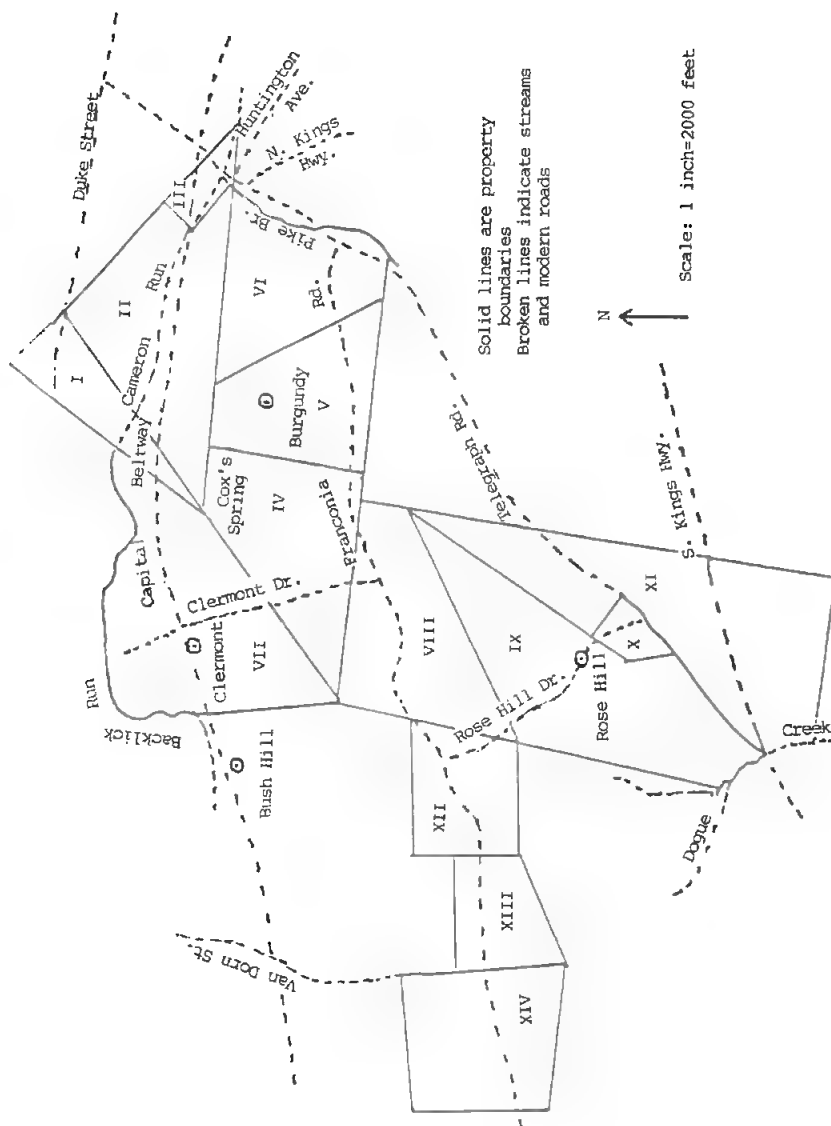
David M. French

Traveling west from the intersection of Telegraph and Franconia Roads in Fairfax County, Virginia, the visitor comes to the subdivisions of Burgundy Village, Clermont Woods, Rose Hill Park, Rose Hill, and Bush Hill Woods. These tracts occupy an area about 2.75 miles east and west and nearly as many miles north and south. At one time most of this land belonged to members of the French family, descendants of Hugh French, 1664(?) - 1701, of Richmond County, Virginia.

From 1737 to 1749 there were two adult members of this family named Daniel living near Alexandria, Virginia. They have often been confused with each other. The elder Daniel (Senior) was born in or shortly after the year 1707, while the younger Daniel (Junior) was born in 1723. They were the sons of half-brothers and so were half first-cousins.^{1,2} They owned adjoining properties south-west of Alexandria.

Daniel French, Sr., was one of six children and the second son of Hugh French of Stafford County, Virginia, who had married Mary (Browne) Triplett in 1705 and died in 1737. Hugh was a son of Hugh French of Richmond County by his first wife, a Miss Withers.³

In 1733 Hugh French of Stafford County bought 770 acres of land from the heirs of George Brent of Woodstock.⁴ This acreage was part of an 1143-acre grant to Brent from the Colony of Virginia made in 1677 and converted to a proprietary grant in 1695⁵ (areas I-VI on accompanying map). Hugh's purchase, areas IV, V, and VI, was the lower part of this land south of a line between Cox's Spring and Cameron Run near Telegraph Road, referred to in this paper as the Cameron Run Tract.



Properties associated with the two Daniel Frenchs.

Hugh's will was recorded in Stafford County on September 13, 1737.⁶ He left his mill and his 600-acre home plantation on the north side of Potomac Creek to his eldest son Hugh. To Daniel he gave one-half of the Cameron Run Tract and four slaves. To his youngest son Mason he gave the other half of the Cameron Run Tract and 200 acres on Muddy Creek.⁷ Mason sold the 200 acres in October 1739.⁸ A mill in the north-east corner of the Cameron Run Tract on Pike Branch was left to Daniel and Mason jointly. According to the estate account of Hugh French, Mason was living in 1739.⁹ He may have died unmarried before the middle of the year 1742. Daniel had possession of the whole of the Cameron Run Tract at that time. (Mason should not be confused with his half-uncle Mason French, ca. 1692-1746, or his half first cousin, Mason, who married Margaret (Johnson) Lacy and died in 1752. His brother Hugh also had a son named Mason.)

Daniel French, Sr., was a farmer. He probably grew tobacco, in common with other farmers in the region at that time. Daniel married Elizabeth Sanford. The Sanfords came from Westmoreland County, Virginia, and may have known the French family in Ireland.¹⁰ Elizabeth was the sister of Richard and Robert Sanford. Richard, who died in 1799 had at least three children: Laurence, Daniel, and Presley. Robert had seven children: Richard, William, Robert, John, James, Edward, and Frances. He died in 1769.¹¹

In 1741 Daniel obtained a grant for 68 acres on the north-west corner of the Brent tract (area I).¹² The parcel adjoined the Clermont estate (area VII). Daniel installed Presley Cox as a tenant. In May, 1742, he sold 404 acres of the Cameron Run Tract to his brother-in-law Richard Sanford. The next day Richard gave 197 acres of this land to his son Robert. When Richard died, his remaining 207 acres passed to his son Richard.¹³ Robert's portion was in the western part of area IV while Richard's 207 acres joined it on the east.¹⁴ Daniel's tract was east and north of Richard Sanford's farm.¹⁵

It is known that there was a farm house on Richard Sanford's land (area V). It stood on the brow of a ridge somewhere on the lawn of the present Burgundy home of Mrs. M. T. Bennett (Dr. Thistle McKee).¹⁶ Cox's Spring may still exist. On an exploration of Loftridge Park a small spring was found emptying into the east side of a stream flowing north through the park about 700 feet south of Elmwood Drive. The area is heavily wooded with small trees and brush.¹⁷ The location fits that of Cox's Spring on various maps and deeds.^{18, 19}

Daniel French, Sr. and his wife Elizabeth had no children. They lived on their farm (area VI) east of Burgundy until he died. He may have speculated in real estate. In 1740, Daniel bought 213 acres of land on the Wancopin Branch of Goose Creek. Wancopin Branch crosses US Route 50 just east of Middleburg.²⁰ (This transaction could have been made by Daniel French, Jr. or Sr. The record is not clear on this point.)

Daniel French, Sr. died early in 1749 a poor man. His grave is unmarked. His estate was valued at 7214 lbs. of tobacco, or £86.²¹ His property went to his wife and then to his godson, Daniel Sanford, his sister Margaret Hansbury, and to Edward Sanford. Elizabeth very soon remarried. Her second husband, Thomas Dent, died late in 1750. Elizabeth took a third husband, her tenant Presley Cox.²² She died in 1782. A year later the heirs sold Daniel's property to Josiah Watson of Alexandria.²³

In 1794 Watson bought the western third of the Cameron Run Tract from Robert Sanford's son Richard for £480.²⁴ The middle parcel passed into the possession of the second Richard's son Presley Sanford and was sold in 1806 to James Hewett Hooe for \$1500.²⁵ Hooe held a number of properties and kept meticulous records of rents and business accounts. One of his ledger books is housed in the Fairfax Circuit Court Archives. On the inside cover is the statement "commenced as Ledger 1 November 1811 at Burgundy." However, page 2, dated March 1, 1808, through p.13, dated September 16, 1808, are headed "Burgundy Farm."

About 1839 Thomas H. Buckner of Loudoun County obtained title to most of Daniel French's three parcels plus the northern part of George Brent's patent (area II). Buckner bought the north part of tract IV and the western half of tract II from Bernard Hooe and Robert J. Taylor in June 1839.²⁶ He sold this part of Burgundy, 151+ acres, in the same month to Peter Tresler for \$2,286.89.²⁷ Buckner also had the central parcel, most of the eastern one, and the other half of area II which he sold to Ezra Lunt on June 21, 1839 for \$4,500.²⁸

The three tracts of Daniel French, Sr. developed in different ways. The western parcel (area IV) contains Loftridge Park, Clermont School Park and Elementary School, and expensive subdivisions. The northwestern boundaries of Loftridge Park and Clermont Elementary School are part of the boundaries of the original Brent patent. The central portion, area V, is occupied by Burgundy Country Day School, Dr. Thistle McKee Bennett's 30-acre farm, and medium-priced single family homes. The northern boundary of Burgundy School property marks the northern boundary of Richard Sanford's area V. Area VI, the eastern parcel, is on lower ground and contains modest homes on small lots.

The southern part of the Cameron Run middle tract (area V) came into the possession of John Jacob Frobel, a Dutchman of German and French ancestry. He called the estate Wilton Hill. He acquired it in several parcels, one on February 16, 1808 from James H. Hooe.²⁹ The deed is missing so we don't know the size of this purchase. In the same year Frobel bought 17.75 acres from Cuthbert and Catherine Powell for \$243.³⁰ In 1813 he bought 10.5 acres from Hooe, so that he had 3200 feet of frontage along Franconia Road west of Sharon Episcopal Chapel and extending north to the intersection of

Cannon and Lakota Roads.^{31, 32} He also acquired 75 to 80 acres south of Matthew's line to Telegraph Road making a total of about 114 acres.³³ There appears to be no complete legal description of Wilton Hill. The release of the property to Frank L. Ballenger in 1911 for \$4100 describes it as

bounded as follows, to wit: on the north by the county road, on the east by Sharon Chapel and the land of Peck and Ballenger, on the south by the county road and the lands of Moore and Javins, and on the west by the lands of Javins . . .³⁴

Daniel French, Jr., 1723-1771, was the son of Daniel French, ca. 1687-1736, of King George County, Va. and his first wife Elizabeth (Peyton) Dade. Daniel of King George was a son of Hugh French, mentioned earlier, ca. 1664-1701, by his second wife Margaret (Gaines) Prosser Miller, ca. 1656-1710.³⁵ In contrast with his cousin of Burgundy, Daniel French, Jr. was well off. With 60 slaves he was the largest slave owner, after George Washington, in Fairfax County in 1760.³⁶ At the time of his death he owned more than 4000 acres in Fairfax, Prince William, and Loudoun Counties. His estate was valued at £6963.³⁷

Daniel French, Jr.'s home plantation was Rose Hill (areas VIII-XII). He married Penelope Manley, daughter of John Manley and Sarah (Massey) Triplett.³⁸ They had one child, Elizabeth, born about 1756 who married Benjamin Dulany of Shooters Hill in 1773.³⁹ Penelope had a sister Sarah and a brother Harrison Manley.⁴⁰ Daniel had one sister, Margaret, who married James Strother.⁴¹ Two origins have been suggested for this line. One is that they were of the same French family in Worcestershire, England who had intermarried with the Masons there. The mother of George Mason the immigrant was Ann French. George Mason married a Mary French in Virginia, the mother of his only son.⁴² It is possible that Mary was the Mary French of Pershore, eight miles southeast of the city of Worcester, who was the daughter of George French and Grace Baugh, and Mason's second cousin.⁴³ Daniel, father of Hugh French of Richmond County, Virginia, might have been an unrecorded member of the same family.⁴⁴

There is also a French, and later, Dulany family of Virginia, originally from northern Ireland.⁴⁵ According to the Rev. Douglas French Forrest, Daniel French of Rose Hill and Clermont named Rose Hill after the seat of the Honorable Granville French, fifth son of a second Lord French of Roscommon, Ireland.⁴⁶ Search has disclosed no Lord French during the eighteenth century, but Charles Ffrench of Castle Ffrench in County Galway was made a baronet in 1779.⁴⁷

The name Clermont, referring to the Fairfax County estate, first appeared in writing in 1795.⁴⁸ It came into the French and Dulany family possession in

1785 some fourteen years after Daniel, Jr.'s death, through its purchase by the Irishman Benjamin Dulany, Daniel's son-in-law.⁴⁹ Daniel himself was referred to as of Rose Hill. The *Memorial Atlas of Ireland* shows a number of estates named Rose Hill and Claremont in Roscommon and Galway Counties in Northern Ireland near French family estates.⁵⁰

A plausible origin for the family is that Daniel, father of Hugh French of Richmond County, Va. came from Ireland, possibly with a sister Mary, to the Northern Neck of Virginia about the year 1658. Mary could have married George Mason the immigrant.^{51a} The name of Daniel's wife is not known. She would not likely be a sister of George Mason. His younger sister was born in 1626; Daniel was born ca. 1639.^{51b}

Daniel French, Jr.'s father Daniel was born about the year 1687. Shortly after the year 1713 he married Elizabeth, daughter of Henry Peyton and widow of Robert Dade. She had at least one son, Townsend, by her first husband and two children, Daniel and Margaret, by her second.⁵² Elizabeth died prior to 1728. In that year the widowed Daniel married Margaret Birkett, daughter of John and Ann Mills Birkett. Margaret was the widow of John Pratt, Jr.⁵³ She had no children by Daniel but did bring him her father's property on the east side of Muddy Creek which flows into the Rappahannock River and divides Stafford and King George Counties. The property was near the river, and Daniel's half-brother Hugh also owned land in the area.⁵⁴ Daniel's operations must have been profitable. In 1723 he bought 903 acres on what is now Telegraph Road north and east of Dogue Creek. This tract was part of Matthews' proprietary grant of 2466 acres.⁵⁵ The land Daniel bought was larger than the Rose Hill estate which occupied most of the site in later times. In 1730 he enlarged the tract by patenting an additional 127 acres on its west side.⁵⁶ (The original purchase was bounded on the east by a line drawn south from the northeast corner of tract VIII and extending down beyond South King's Highway. The boundary then extended west, eleven degrees north, to Dogue Creek.)

Daniel died in 1736. His will has been lost but his estate was valued at £335.15.7.⁵⁷ His widow lived until 1749. His son Daniel French, Jr. inherited the Rose Hill estate and was in possession before Margaret died. In 1746 he was sued for trespass by John Ball over part of this land.⁵⁸ Ball produced a 1742 deed for 142 acres. Daniel produced the 1730 proprietary grant to his father for 127 acres. A survey was ordered by the court, depositions taken, and, in 1760, the jury determined that Ball's claim should be upheld. Daniel was fined £20 sterling. He motioned for a new trial. This time the jury supported Daniel's claim, and John Ball was to "take nothing by his Bill but for his false Clamour be in mercy. . ." Ball had to pay Daniel his costs of the suit.

Daniel French, Jr. was a successful businessman. He managed four farms, originally consisting of ten parcels, in Fairfax County, at least three in later

Loudoun County, and two in Prince William. He put his cousin John French in charge of the Loudoun properties. To operate his farms, Daniel had 60 slaves and a number of apprentices and indentured servants.⁵⁹ One of these was John Goddard, a carpenter, who agreed, for reduction of two years in his indenture time, to teach one of Daniel's negroes how to frame a house, to weatherboard and shingle, to lay floors, build stairs, windows and frames. With this kind of help Daniel was in effect a building contractor. He was so well regarded in the neighborhood that he was employed by the Truro Parish vestry to build the present Pohick Church.⁶⁰ Daniel was also a church vestryman,⁶¹ a justice of the county court,⁶² and at times agent and attorney-in-fact.⁶³

Daniel French, Jr. became involved in real estate transactions quite early. He was 20 years old when he sold 223 acres of land west of Telegraph Road and east of the Long Branch of Accotink Creek to Daniel Hart in 1743.⁶⁴ He acquired 68 acres on the Mt. Vernon peninsula from his father-in-law John Manley in 1746 for £60.⁶⁵ In 1747 he bought 443 acres on Buckhorn Branch from Joseph Garret for £40.⁶⁶ (This stream does not appear on present-day maps. Buckhorn Branch might have been the present Indian Run, a branch of Backlick Run which flows into Holmes Run.) In 1751 he bought 198 acres on the Mt. Vernon peninsula, on the north side of Dogue Creek, from Richard Osborne's executor.⁶⁷ These properties were on good farming land and could have brought in some income. In 1756 and 1757 he acquired three large parcels of land: 1003 acres between Sugarland and Difficult Run in Cameron Parish,⁶⁸ 580 acres near the present city of Falls Church,⁶⁹ and 318 acres north and west of Middleburg.⁷⁰ Daniel's wife Penelope, after the death of her father John Manley in 1751, inherited properties in this area.⁷¹

In the 1760's Daniel increased his holdings by 100 acres west of the Rose Hill rectangle straddling Franconia Road⁷² and 210 acres immediately west of that⁷³ (areas XIII and XIV). In 1764 he acquired 364 acres in two parcels located north of Pohick Creek near the present US Route 1. This property he deeded to his daughter Elizabeth.⁷⁴ In June 1760 he added 143 acres to his Mt. Vernon peninsula properties by a purchase from John Posey.⁷⁵ He then had three farms totaling 411 acres in the area north of the mouth of Dogue Creek. Daniel French, Jr., George Washington, and Harrison Manley were the only land owners on the peninsula at that time.

In 1785, Daniel's Mt. Vernon lands were exchanged by his son-in-law Benjamin Dulany for Clermont, acquired by George Washington in 1782 (area VII).⁷⁶ Penelope had a life interest in this property but in October 1786 she agreed to give up her interest to Washington in exchange for £136 per year.⁷⁷ Washington thus completed his holdings and possessed the entire peninsula.

Areas VIII through XII on the map totaling 1030 acres were Daniel French, Jr.'s Rose Hill tract. Area XII, 127 acres, was a proprietary grant to

Daniel's father February 19, 1730.⁷⁸ The largest part of the Rose Hill tract came out of the western portion of Matthew's proprietary grant of 2466 acres.⁷⁹ John Matthew's grand-daughter Rosannah and her husband Mott Doniphan sold 903 acres to Daniel French in 1723 for 10,000 pounds of tobacco.⁸⁰ The house at Rose Hill was on the highest ground and "from the front lawn there was a magnificent view of the valley, in the direction of the Potomac River which was seven miles away"⁸¹ (actually four to five and a half miles). The house must have been on the top of the hill rising north from Telegraph Road, (the Old Stage Road) and probably near the present Rose Hill Drive. Mrs. Daingerfield Love, daughter of John and Harriet Daingerfield who later bought Rose Hill, has described the house and grounds:

The house was beautiful, the woodwork very fine, especially the Chippendale cupboard built in a corner of the drawing room. The chimney was six feet thick, which made later heating very difficult. Mantels in the first floor rooms very fine, as were the egg and dart mouldings on frieze of the first floor cornices.

The edge of the lawn was lined with lilac bushes and a variety of trees, among them were locust, horse chestnut, maple, cedar, pine, and black walnut. The lawn was terraced down to the first field and myrtle, day lillies and fennel covered the field below the terrace. A grape arbor was at the side of the lawn and at the end was a sunken garden where the one-hundred-leaf rose, *Rosa Centifolia*, covered the sides.⁸²

When Daniel French, Jr. died in 1771, he was buried on the lawn of Rose Hill under a flat stone with an epitaph composed by his daughter Elizabeth. When the farm was sold for development in the twentieth century his remains and the stone were removed to Pohick behind the church he had helped to build and where he had been a vestryman.

Daniel French, Jr. had lived in the Parish of Truro, formed from Ovenwhar-ton Parish in 1733. In 1749 that part of Truro west of Difficult Run became Cameron Parish and in 1765 Fairfax Parish was created from the northern part of the remainder. Christ Church and the Falls Church were in the new Parish while Pohick Church was in Truro. Daniel French, Jr. was among the vestrymen of Fairfax parish when they held their first meeting August 26, 1765.⁸³ He had been involved with Pohick Church for some time. The original Pohick Church was south of Pohick Creek on the Potomac Path or River Road, now called Old Colchester Road. It was a frame building which became quite dilapidated. In 1751 the vestry gave Daniel a contract to repair the sills and sleepers, to shingle the north side of the church, make good the pews and floor, and put through new windows. Evidently he did a good job.

When the vestry decided to build a new brick church they wanted Daniel to do the work. The new church was to be located at the intersection of the Rolling Road and the Back Road, now US Route 1 and Old Colchester Road, about two miles north of the old church, on land Daniel had bought from Hannah Randall in 1764⁸⁴ and deeded to the church trustees.⁸⁵ The vestry minutes read:

A yard was laid off for the said church, and a certain quantity of land laid off for the use of said parish, for which the said vestry do agree to pay Daniel French, Gent. at the rate of one guinea per acre, for what the same shall measure.⁸⁶

In his article on Pohick Close, Thomas Triplett Russell states:

... it is unlikely that Daniel French bought this property in anticipation of a removal of Pohick Church from the site it then occupied about two miles south. Daniel French was an astute land speculator and the land probably appealed to him by reason of its strategic location. It was on both sides of the post road, sometimes called the King's Highway, at the point where it was crossed by the Ravensworth rolling road to Pohick Warehouse and joined by the road to Posey's Ferry...⁸⁷

Daniel undertook to build the church in 1769 for the sum of £877 current money of Virginia. He was ultimately paid in tobacco. The building committee was composed of George William Fairfax, George Washington, George Mason, Daniel McCarty, and Edward Payne. The church was designed by James Wren, William West, and perhaps Daniel French himself. Construction continued until Daniel's death in 1771. The project was completed by his executor, George Mason of Gunston Hall. Mason was not finally discharged by the vestry until February 1774.⁸⁸

Being sick and weak of body, Daniel French, Jr. made his will on May 10, 1771 and died shortly after. He was 48 years old. His beneficiaries were his wife Penelope to whom he left a life interest in Rose Hill and his other farms together with the slaves, live-stock and furnishings; his daughter Elizabeth who received the property in which her mother had a life interest including all his lands in Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William Counties; and various friends and relatives to whom he left a number of bequests. Among them were his first cousin Hugh French who lived with him (Hugh was a son of Mason French by his first wife), his niece Sarah Triplett (probably a daughter of Sarah Manley, Penelope's sister), Penelope's brother Harrison Manley, his half-brother Townsend Dade (son of Daniel's mother by her first husband), his sister's son French Strother, and a William Spencer.⁸⁹ At the time of his death, Daniel's real estate holdings amounted to about 4077 acres in

Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William Counties.⁹⁰ Fairfax County Quit Rents for 1770 show his holdings as totaling 3997 acres.⁹¹ Another 300+ acres were in his daughter Elizabeth's name, and his widow Penelope held property in Loudoun County. In addition to land, Daniel died seized of sixty slaves and a fine house. He appointed Penelope and his friend George Mason executors of his estate and guardians of Elizabeth. The estate was not settled until 1777 when Elizabeth was 21 years old and the wife of Benjamin Dulany.⁹²

A marriage agreement, dated February 4, 1773, between "Benjamin Dulany of the City of Annapolis, in the Province of Maryland, Gentleman, and Penelope French, widow, and George Mason Esquire of Fairfax County, . . . guardians and trustees of and for and on behalf of Elizabeth French, spinster, of the said county . . . an infant under the age of twenty-one years (to wit about the age of Seventeen Years)" was signed and recorded on June 21, 1777.⁹³ The agreement specified that should Elizabeth die without heirs, or should her children die during her lifetime without heirs, her slaves would not descend to Dulany's relatives. Commenting on the match, George Washington wrote to his friend Burwell Bassett on February 15, 1773:

Our celebrated fortune, Miss French, whom half the world was in pursuit of, bestowed her hand on Wednesday last, being her birthday (you perceive I think myself under the necessity of accounting for her choice) upon Mr. Ben Dulany, who is to take her to Maryland in a month from this time.⁹⁴

After Daniel's death, Rose Hill passed to his wife Penelope, and then to their daughter Elizabeth.⁹⁵ Elizabeth's husband Benjamin Dulany protected his wife's interests, and his own. On February 20, 1808, a document was recorded in the Fairfax County court stating:

Benjamin Dulany and Robert Moss both of the County of Alexandria in the District of Columbia . . . Whereas . . . Robert Moss did in . . . 1806 obtain a patent . . . for 164 acres of land . . . adjoining the lands of the said Benjamin Dulany . . . supposed to be vacant. But . . . Dulany . . . found a patent in the name of Daniel French dated February 19, 1730 for 127 acres which he supposes to cover a part of the said 164 acres . . . which he claims in right of his wife . . . daughter and devisee of . . . Daniel French . . . In order to settle every difficulty that may arise . . . the parties and their representatives . . . have mutually agreed to survey . . .⁹⁶

The survey proved Moss's patent to overlap French. Moss was left with 51 acres out of his original 164.⁹⁷

In 1809, Elizabeth and Ben gave their son Ben, Jr. of Charles County, Maryland, 400 acres, half of the Rose Hill tract (area IX).⁹⁸ Also in 1809, Elizabeth and Ben transferred to their son Daniel all their real properties in trust for

the wife and several children of the said Benjamin Dulany, Sr. now unmarried . . . whereas the said Benjamin Dulany, Sr. has a great variety of valuable property lying in various directions, which for the want of more active attention produces little or no profit; whereas it might be made very productive and useful to his family if properly managed . . . and believing he can in no wise better secure their interest than transferring the whole of his property Real personal and mixed to the management of his Son the said Daniel Dulany (in whom he has the utmost confidence) whose youth and activity will render it more productive . . .⁹⁹

Bank shares were excluded from this arrangement, as well as cash on hand. As part of the agreement, Daniel Dulany was to pay his father an annuity of \$500, to begin September 8, 1810 and every year thereafter. The complete agreement was to be in effect for the natural life of Benjamin Dulany, Sr. and to cease upon his death.

Ben, Jr. sold his half of Rose Hill for \$6000 about a year after receiving it, to Robert Fauntleroy of Richmond County, Virginia.¹⁰⁰ Fauntleroy sold to Henry Toler¹⁰¹ who sold the 359 acres to James and Susanna Russell in 1814.¹⁰² In 1812, the remaining 347 acres of Rose Hill (areas VIII and XII) were conveyed by the senior Dulanys to William Herbert, Jr. in trust for Elizabeth.¹⁰³ Herbert, as trustee, sold the property to William Simms in 1813 for \$5116.¹⁰⁴

Elizabeth and Benjamin, although the parents of twelve children, were on very bad terms and had separated by 1808. In her study of Clermont,¹⁰⁵ Edith Sprouse described the domestic life of the Dulanys before they separated:

Hints that the Dulanys may have had a tempestuous life may be glimpsed in the poem "The Ball at Shooters Hill" where the guests were marched around at gunpoint;

Round through the parlors, out on the grass
Down through the garden and back did they pass

After some hours of this entertainment, Dulany grabbed his wife, perched her on top of a cask of vinegar, and locked her in the pantry. She reputedly never spoke to him again.

William Simms owned the land to the east of Rose Hill. In 1823 he sold 32 acres of the southwest corner of his property to the Russells.¹⁰⁶ This parcel probably shortened the access to their home from Telegraph Road. In 1837, after 23 years at Rose Hill, the Russells sold their property to Maynadier Mason.¹⁰⁷ The sale price was \$4900, with a trust paid off in ten years.¹⁰⁸ Maynadier was a son of General John Mason of Analostan Island and Clermont.¹⁰⁹ On November 18, 1830, he married Mary Virginia French, daughter of

Charles French of Georgetown who died in 1819.¹¹⁰ She died prior to 1854.¹¹¹ Maynadier must have found marriage agreeable; in that year he married Mary A. Fitzhugh.¹¹² After Maynadier's death in 1865, Rose Hill was sold in 1868 to John and Rebecca Daingerfield.¹¹³ The Daingerfields transferred their estate to their son William in 1883.¹¹⁴ In 1892, William and Harriet Taylor Daingerfield of Alexandria, Virginia sold Rose Hill to Margaret K. Atherton of the District of Columbia.¹¹⁵ Atherton sold in 1893 to Clara A. Riedel.¹¹⁶ Riedel, a widow, sold Rose Hill to Carleton B. Hazard.¹¹⁷ The 1901 deed includes:

22 head of Jersey cattle, 14 milch cows, 1 bull and a half interest in 7 calves,
2 engines, 2 mills, all household furniture now in the dwelling house
situated on said farm known as Rose Hill farm.

In the same year, Hazard conveyed the Rose Hill property to John M. Johnson and P. A. Darneille.¹¹⁸ About this time, the house caught fire from an overheated chimney and burned down.¹¹⁹ The Rose Hill tracts are now covered by hundreds of suburban homes, a shopping center, the Rose Hill Elementary School, and the Greendale Golf Course.

Daniel French, Jr. owned several farms in Loudoun County near the border of Fauquier in the present Middleburg and Upperville areas. Some of this property had belonged to the Harrison family and came to the Frenchs and Dulany through Daniel's wife Penelope. One of the farms was Crednal and one was Anchorage, now called Catesby. At one time Daniel lived at Anchorage.¹²⁰ He installed his first cousin John French as manager of these properties.¹²¹ John, son of Mason French and Catherine (Ellis) Bennett, married Margaret Burgess in 1750 and had nine children: Mason, Daniel, George, John, Reuben, Elizabeth, Burgess, Margaret Burgess, and Sarah.¹²² John French bought land on his own, 207 acres in the valley of Fauquier facing the Blue Ridge. When Daniel died, his Loudoun property was valued at £1353.¹²³ The Loudoun estates passed to Elizabeth Dulany's children John Peyton Dulany and Louisa who married Richard deButts. John Peyton married Richard's sister Mary Anne. Richard and Mary Anne were children of Dr. Samuel deButts and his wife Mary Anne Welby deButts.¹²⁴ During the War of 1812 John Peyton, Mary Anne, Richard, and Louisa moved to Loudoun, keeping ahead of the British who had occupied Washington. Richard and Louisa lived at Crednal. John Peyton and Mary Anne lived at what is now Old Welbourne. They bought additional property a mile or so away and named it Welbourne, the name of Mary Anne Welby's ancestral town in Lincolnshire, England.¹²⁵

John Peyton Dulany and his wife Mary Anne had a son Col. Richard Henry Dulany, CSA, born in 1820, who in 1847 married the wealthy Rebecca Anne Dulany, daughter of Richard's first cousin Major Rozier Dulany, son of

Benjamin (Tasker) Dulany, Jr. and Eliza Rozier. Col. Richard inherited Welbourne. It is now the home of the Morison family, Dulany descendants.¹²⁶

Clermont (area VII) was the eastern part of property owned by Col. John West. West, with William and Thomas Harrison and Thomas Pearson, had patented 4639 acres December 23, 1706. The patent was divided into eight parts in 1714. John West received two one-eighth sections.¹²⁷ His portion was sold by his heirs to Robert Adam, Peter Dow, and Colin McIver in 1780, and by them sold to George Washington in 1782. As discussed earlier, Washington exchanged Clermont for Benjamin Dulany's Mt. Vernon peninsula lands once owned by Daniel French.¹²⁸

After 1816, when Benjamin Dulany died, Clermont was occupied by several owners and tenants until in 1833 it was bought by General John Mason of Analostan Island whose son Maynadier would, a few years later, acquire Rose Hill. In 1849 Mason died and Clermont was sold to Leven Powell.¹²⁹ Powell sold it in 1851 to Capt. French Forrest USN and CSN.¹³⁰ French Forrest, son of Elizabeth French Dulany and Major Joseph Forrest and grandson of Benjamin Dulany and Elizabeth French, lost the property in the Civil War. Clermont was confiscated under an Act of Congress of July 17, 1862 entitled "An Act to suppress insurrection, to punish treason and rebellion, to seize and confiscate the property of rebels . . ." and sold to Dr. Edward Brulty (?) who assigned his interest to Dr. John R. Bigelow and Westel Willoughby. Bigelow conveyed his interest to Willoughby who in turn conveyed all his interest back to Bigelow.¹³¹ Dr. Bigelow, a Union physician, used Clermont during the war as a hospital for contagious diseases. The house burned down in the fall of 1865.¹³²

Captain French Forrest served in the Confederate Navy from July 1, 1862 to April 1865. He died intestate November 24, 1866. His son Douglas French Forrest reclaimed the Clermont lands after the war when the court ruled that Congress "could not create a forfeiture for crime except during the life of the person attainted."¹³³ The Reverend Douglas French Forrest died on or about May 3, 1902.¹³⁴

The house at Clermont was located where the Capital Beltway now runs just west of the Clermont Drive underpass. The southern part of the estate is now occupied by schools and suburban homes. Eisenhower Avenue runs through the northern portion flanked by a number of light industries.

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Notes

FDB (Fairfax County Deed Book)
 FWB (Fairfax County Will Book)
 KGDB (King George County Deed Book)
 LRLS (Land Records of Long Standing, 1742-1770)
 PWDB (Prince William County Deed Book)
 PWLC (Prince William County Land Causes)
 PWWB (Prince William County Will Book)
 SDB (Stafford County Deed Book)
 SWB (Stafford County Will Book)

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² Eunice M. White, *French-Triplett Connections, Part 1: French Family in America*; unpublished work, 1986.

³ Deborah L. French and Sarah Fitzhugh, *Our Jamestown Ancestry (Beheathland)*; unpublished work on the French family obtained from Mrs. Hugh French of Reedville, Virginia, 1986.

⁴ PWDB B:134.

⁵ Beth Mitchell, *Beginning at a White Oak, patents and Northern Neck grants of Fairfax County, Virginia*: 32. Office of Comprehensive Planning, 1977.

⁶ SWB M:247.

⁷ KGDB 1:337

⁸ KGDB 4:80.

⁹ SWB M:278.

¹⁰ Rev. Douglas French Forrest, "French Family." *Richmond Times Dispatch*, October 30, 1904, Section C:10.

¹¹ James D. Preston, "Archives of Burgundy;" Historical Society of Fairfax County *Yearbook*, v. 3:40 (1954).

¹² Mitchell, op. cit:176.

¹³ FDB X₁:272.

¹⁴ FDB O₂:239, 310.

- ¹⁵ FDB O₁:188.
- ¹⁶ Conversation with Mrs. M. T. Bennett (Dr. Thistle McKee Bennett) of Burgundy, May and June 1990.
- ¹⁷ Exploration of Loftridge Park, Fairfax County, May, 1990.
- ¹⁸ Beth Mitchell, *An Interpretive Historical Map of Fairfax County, Virginia*, 1760, with D. M. Sweig, editor. Office of Comprehensive Planning, 1987.
- ¹⁹ FDB P₁:311, 318.
- ²⁰ G. E. Gray, *Virginia Northern Neck Land Grants, 1694-1742*; Genealogical Publishing Company, Baltimore, Maryland, 1987:135.
- ²¹ FWB A₁pt. 2:269, 270.
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- ²² PWLC 1805-26:473-476, Deposition of William Talbut, 1808.
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- ²⁵ FDB G₂:321.
- ²⁶ FDB E₃:381.
- ²⁷ Ibid:420.
- ²⁸ FDB E₃:366.
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- ³⁰ FDB J₂:88.
- ³¹ FDB N₂:151 (missing). See Drawer X, Circuit Court Archives, deed from James H. and Eliza Hooe to William Cranch.
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- ³⁶ Mitchell, *An Interpretive Historical Map* . . . op. cit.
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White, op. cit.
- ⁵⁴ KGDB 1A:260, 307, 311, 337.
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- ⁶⁵ FDB B,:161.
- ⁶⁶ Ibid:321.
Fairfax Court Orders 1783-1788:106.
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- ⁶⁸ FDB D₁pt. 1:362.
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- ⁷⁰ Ibid:413.
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- ⁷⁴ FDB K,:325.
- ⁷⁵ FDB D₁pt. 2:730.
- ⁷⁶ FDB P,:311, 318.
- ⁷⁷ FDB Q,:393.
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- ¹⁰¹ Ibid. See L₂:400.
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- ¹⁰⁷ Ibid:346.
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- ¹⁰⁹ Mollie Somerville, "General John Mason of Analostan Island;" *The Iron Worker*, v. 26:3, Lynchburg, Virginia, 1962.
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- ¹¹³ FDB I₄:205.
- ¹¹⁴ FDB C₅:291.
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- ¹²⁶ Ibid (Conversations).
- Hagey, op. cit.
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Fishing the Potomac

The Neitzey Family Fisheries at Ferry Landing and Stony Point

by

Captain William Neitzey¹
with historical discussion by the editors

When Captain John Smith saw such “an abundance of fish lying so thick with their heads above the water” his crew, lacking nets, used a frying pan as a scoop. The Indians had for thousands of years fished the Potomac River with hooks and weirs, V-shaped enclosures set in a waterway to obstruct and trap the fish. Sturgeon could be caught fifty or sixty at a time using a net. Shad, drum, oysters, mussels, gar, and herring abounded in the river and some fish were three feet in length.

In 1656 John Hammond wrote “the rivers afford innumerable sortes of choyce fish (if they will take the paines to make wyers or hier the Native, who for a small matter will undertake it) winter and summer.”²

As early as 1638 the Maryland legislature found it necessary to propose legislation concerning the use of “Sceynes or other unlawful net.” By 1712, a law was passed prohibiting striking or shooting fish with gigs, arrows, or other instruments, particularly at night in boats outfitted for the purpose.³

Information about fishing at Great Hunting Creek near Alexandria may be found in the lawsuit *Alexander vs. Birch* filed in Prince William County in 1782.⁴ Witnesses testified as to the first county road to cross the Creek, other crossing places, and place names such as the Salt House and Rock Hole.⁵ Henry Biggs, age 85, stated on November, 1785, that he had seen the seine hauled many times at the Rock Hole and rockfish caught there.⁶ Biggs stated that he had caught rockfish with a hook but never with a seine. He had come into the neighborhood “about two years before the hard winter . . . about 45 years ago” and lived on the south side of the Creek.

Reverend Lee Massey, in his deposition, stated that he had lived nearby in 1739. Just west of Jones Point there was a deep gut running to the northeast. "They used to catch fish there by making a hedge across the mouth of it to catch herrings and that time fish might be caught in every little gut that emptied into the river."⁷ John Summers, 92, said when he moved nearby in 1715 "the tide came up higher than the place where the first county road crossed the Creek. In high water people used to go up to the place where the present road crosses."⁸ Large quantities of rock fish used to be driven up the Creek as high as the salt house." He remembered helping to drive rockfish with bushes and to have caught about four hundred at that time. When the tide went out the fish were left behind.⁹

In the colonial period private fishing shores became the custom. These were landings used over a long period of time where the waterline had been cleared of obstacles. Large nets or seines were carried out into the river by boat, then spread and hauled into shore with the catch. Laws were passed protecting the rights of fisheries and forbidding encroachment within a quarter mile of the landings. George Mason, oldest son of the statesman, lived on the Lexington plantation on Mason Neck. He had several fisheries: Sandy Point, High Point, Stony Point, Sycamore Landing, Mill Landing, Holland Point, Court's Point, Barn Landing, Gunston, and Ferguson's Landing. Most of these were rented out by the year. Peter Coulter was paying £30.0.0 or \$100 to fish the Sandy Point Landing before Mason died in 1796; between 1797 and 1801 his rent increased to \$185 annually.¹⁰ Coulter purchased Daniel McCarty's contract to fish the High Point Landing and paid \$95 in 1801 and \$311 for 1802 and 1803. In 1804 he fished Stony Point, which had been rented for some years by William (?) Huskins. The two men were partners until 1804 when Huskins died. Coulter then shifted operations to Holland Point, which he rented from John Crawford in 1807-1808 for \$40 per year. Rents seemed to vary among the fisheries, and Holland Point had not been used since before George Mason's death. Coulter's will directed that rents from the fishing landings be used for his daughters until his sons were old enough to take possession.¹¹

Fishing "stops" usually known as fishing stands were in use along Four Mile Run in 1726 or 1727.¹² Farther up the Potomac, close to the Little Falls, many fishing stands were established by the 1780's. Sycamore Stand, owned by Henry Lee, was described in a 1789 deed as beginning three feet below Boiling Rock Stand and ran thirty feet up the Potomac and sixty feet back. The deed included "all the stands and profits thereof." This parcel of land was purchased by William Waters and Simon Adams for £7.0.0. Lee also sold Overseer's Stand, which included Sturgeon Point, for £14.0.0. and Warehouse Stand, below the Little Falls of Potomac, for £17.8.0.¹³




A portion of the Mt. Vernon District sheet from Hopkin's Atlas of Fifteen Miles Around Washington, 1879, showing fishing shores.

George Washington, in his *Writings* stated that the Potomac River was "well-stocked with various kinds of fish at all seasons of the year; in the spring with the greatest profusion of bass, carp, shad, herring, perch, sturgeon, etc." Several valuable fisheries were part of the Mount Vernon estate "the whole shore, in short, is one entire fishery."¹⁴ Washington complained in 1758 that his goods shipped from England were unsatisfactory. "Besides leaving out one half . . . of the articles I sent for, I find the Seine is without Leads, Corks, and Ropes which render it useless." When the herring run occurred in the spring, the catch from his Mount Vernon fisheries was salted down in barrels and used as food for the slaves and for sale in the winter. In runs of abundance herring might be used as fertilizer on the fields. On a plantation bounded by more than ten miles of Potomac shoreline, Washington's attention to fishing equalled that given to farming his fields. Two seines he had ordered in 1760 were 35 fathoms in length, 20 feet deep, "made of the best 3 thd. laid twine, small Inch Meshes, hung loose on the lines and well fixed with Leads and Corks."¹⁵

Advertisement in the Alexandria Gazette for March 4, 1824, p.3.

Shad Fishery to be Rented.



THIS fishery, at which one hundred and twenty thousand shad have been caught in one season, is on the Fairfax shore of the Occoquan is very easily fished, and at little expense—not more than ten hands are necessary to haul a seine perfectly adapted to the shore. Persons wishing to barrel shad, can be supplied on reasonable terms.

ALSO, THE GUNSTON LANDING,
On the lower side of Pohick.
 This shore is remarkable for land custom of making, &c. and is easily fished. Six or six hauls can be made on a tide.

ALSO, COURTS' POINT.
On the Potomac, just below the House.
 This shore commands the Potomac channel, it was once fished by some Baltimore fishermen, who put up about forty barrels of shad, it is judiciously fished, there is no doubt of its being a valuable shad landing. It is confidently believed that ten millions of herring may be taken at this shore.

Good comfortable buildings are on all these landings. Application to be made to the subscriber, at Mount Eagle, near Alexandria.

GEORGE MASON.
 feb 17 1824

In the 1850's, Washington's fishing shores were still being rented out by his heirs. Samuel Whitall, in a deposition dated November 30, 1849, stated that he had leased the fishing shore on the Mount Vernon estate for each spring of the last twenty years.¹⁶ Whitall rented Ferry Landing in 1850 and 1851 from Mrs. Jane C. Washington. His account with her was credited with shad at \$8 per hundred and herring at \$6 per thousand.¹⁷

An article in the *Maryland Gazette* of December 3, 1807 stated that on the Maryland shore of the Potomac alone there were eighty fisheries between Maryland Point and the falls of the river. Some rented for as high as \$1000 per season and yielded as many as 200,000 herring. Prices ran from \$4 to \$6 a bushel for shad and 10 to 12 shillings per thousand for herring. Martin's *Gazetteer of Virginia*, published in 1835, discussed the economic aspect of the fishing industry. There were 158 fisheries on the Potomac in 1832, requiring a work force of 6550 laborers at the landings and another 1350 men on board the 450 vessels engaged in the haul. In six weeks time more than 22,500,000 shad would be caught and three times that number of herring.^{18*} Almost a million barrels were needed, as well as vast quantities of salt to preserve the catch. Approximately 975,000 barrels of fish were salted in 1833.¹⁹ In 1837, the White House fishery at Belvoir was one of the major operations on the Virginia shore.²⁰

By the 1840's the great fisheries of the Potomac began to decline. Pearson Chapman, Sr., who lived at Mount Aventine on the Maryland shore opposite Mason Neck²¹ was quoted in the United States Fish Commission *Bulletin* for 1884:

For the last thirty years there has been a gradual decrease of fish in the Potomac, owing, as I believe, to two causes — first, the immense quantity taken out principally by the gill-nets; secondly, by the dragging of seines and gill-nets over the bottom, destroying the spawn . . . Forty or fifty years ago it was not uncommon to take at a single haul fish estimated at from two to three hundred thousand . . . Now from ten to twenty thousand is considered a great haul (December 22, 1875).²²

Fishing on such a large scale meant loss of business for smaller fisherman and the eventual closing of almost all the Potomac fisheries by the early twentieth century.²³ Responding to the editors of the *Richmond State* who had printed an article on the declining fisheries, the *Alexandria Gazette* for March 6, 1879 stated:

A reduction of \$300,000 in the value of the annual products of a single river is surely a matter to awaken grave attention and inquiry . . . Wanton greed and unreasoning ignorance have wrought it.²⁴

*Martin's figures were disputed in an article appearing in the *Alexandria Gazette* August 8, 1878.

An article in *Forest and Stream* in 1876 stated that an estimated 1000 gill nets were always set on the Potomac and that stricter game laws were needed.²⁵

The seines sometimes caught more than fish. A Fairfax County court record for April 29, 1847 states that an inquest was taken at Stony Point fishery

upon the view of the body of an unknown negro boy which was hauled up in the Seine of the said Fishery, then and there lying dead, and upon the oaths of Richard H. Wheeler, J. T. Ball, William M. Violett, E. L. Bates, etc. etc., good and lawful men of the County of Fairfax, who being sworn and charged to enquire, on the part of the said Commonwealth, when, where, how, and after what manner, the said unknown negro boy came to his death, do say, upon their oath, that the said negro boy came to his death by drowning and that the same being so thoroughly mutilated by putrifaction that it was impossible to discover any marks of violence upon him.²⁶

Pollution was a third problem causing a decrease in the number of fish caught. In the 1884 issue of the *Bulletin* Marshall McDonald detailed the effect on the shad population of waste from the Washington Gas Company and a nearby ammonia works.²⁷ The *Alexandria Gazette* for March 30, 1870, in a lengthy article on the use of salt by the Potomac fisheries, stated that herring and shad before the Civil War had numbered five times the 1870 count. "Fishermen say the river is polluted by coal tar from the gas works."

The declining fishing industry was a continuing subject of newspaper articles. The *Alexandria Gazette* for March 27, 1879 quoted the *Washington Star* of the day before:

Our fish wharf presents at the present time a gloomy contrast with the busy scenes of former years. A stroll there last evening by a *Star* reporter resulted in his drawing from Captain William E. Stewart several interesting facts respecting the fishing business. Capt. Stewart is a veteran fisherman and game hunter, having spent a lifetime on and about the Potomac river. Most of the products from the fishing shores which come to this District are consigned to him and to Mr. R. A. Golden. They act as agents for the owners of the landings . . . They also, when the supply will admit of it, pack shad in ice and ship them to other markets—a large number ordinarily being sent to New York, Boston and the Western cities, where high prices are realized. This industry, heretofore quite profitable, has almost ceased, owing to the scarcity of shad, and doubts are entertained that enough shad and herring will be caught this season for the supply of our own local markets . . . Of the many fishing shores which for the last fifty or more years have been busy with gangs of fishermen, the following only have been rented the present season and at greatly reduced rates: Jackson City, south of the Long Bridge, is fished by Mr. Henry Knight; Fairy Landing by William Knight; Stony Point, William Knight; Free Stone Point, Jacob D. Faunce (this landing will

be fished with pound nets, seines having been discarded); Clifton, Capt. Waller; Gums, Jerre Raub; Windmill Point, Capt. Mitchell, and Caywood's landing by James Caywood. The above are on the Virginia side of the river and embrace all the shores which are rented. The shores not rented this year are . . . White House, Sycamore, High Point, Marsh Point, Marsh Hall, Cockpit Point, Possum Nose, Hooe's Shore, Arkendale, Tumps, Split Rock, Maryland Point, Morris Gut, Smith's Point, Goose Bay, Craney Island, Indian Head, Greenway, Hatton's Point, Tent Landing, Sandy Bar, Stick Landing and many other small landings, which in old times were valuable shores and rented at liberal prices . . . Stony Point and White House Landings have run out entirely . . .²⁸

Conservation was becoming an issue as the supply of fish in the Potomac was reaching disaster levels. An editorial in the *Alexandria Gazette* for May 19, 1859 stated that it was high time, if not already too late, to put a stop to the wholesale destruction. The article called for a complete stop to all hauling, gilling, or taking the fish in any way whatever for at least one year and then every fourth year thereafter.²⁹ Artificial propagation and legal protection were also suggested.³⁰ However, the *Alexandria Gazette* for March 22, 1880, quoting Mr. McDonald, the Fish Commissioner of Virginia, stated that it was useless to expend money in artificial plantings so long as the fishermen were allowed to interpose with seines, nets, weirs, and pounds, obstructing the ascent of fish to their spawning grounds.³¹

To replenish the diminishing supply of shad and herring in the Potomac, the federal government introduced hatcheries, with eggs supplied by the fishermen. On May 17, 1873, a camp was established by the U.S. Commissioner of Fish and Fisheries on the Potomac River. About one hundred hatching boxes were anchored above the western end of the Long Bridge opposite Washington. Some 1,400,000 young shad were placed in the river.³² According to the 1885 *Bulletin*, the Ferry Landing fishing shore produced 2,536,000 shad eggs between April 20 and June 5, 1885.³³ The average yield per ripe female was about 30,000 eggs. In the 1882 *Bulletin*, Fish Commissioner Spencer F. Baird described the program to induce fishermen to furnish shad eggs to increase the supply of shad:

A liberal price will be paid to all gillers, pound net, and seine fishermen for eggs of the shad taken according to these instructions, and delivered on board the steamers of the Commission in their daily trips; by waving the hat or other signal the steamers will run down to the boats or land at the shores . . .

As soon as the shad are taken in the nets or seines, those which are ripe or soft should be selected, taking up the shad one by one. If ripe, the eggs will flow freely from the shad when a gentle pressure is applied to the belly of the fish.



Stripping shad. United States Fish Commission Bulletin volume II p. 390, 1882. Courtesy of Technical Information Services, Department of Interior, National Fisheries Center, Kearneysville, West Virginia.

The milter, or male shad, is rather smaller than the female; the sex will be known by the flow of milt from the fish. A very small quantity of milt will impregnate a large number of eggs, about one male in good condition to two or three females.³⁴

Instructions as to how to apply the milt to the eggs were included in the article.

In 1913, the *Washington Star* documented the final days of commercial shad and herring fishing on the Potomac:

The Bureau of Fisheries has reported that this season has been practically a barren one in the Chesapeake basin. The catch in the Potomac river has been the smallest one in many years, perhaps ever. It has been announced in the press that at Ferry Landing, one of the biggest fisheries of the Potomac, and where is operated the largest seine, 1200 fathoms long, operations were discontinued in mid-season because of scarcity of fish. In other years 200,000 herring have been taken in a single seine haul at this place. The largest haul this season was 3000 herring and 100 shad, while in many hauls a few hundred herring and five or ten shad would be taken.

The same issue of the *Star* reported that Chesapeake fishermen were converting herring into fertilizer, for the reason that they could make more money selling the fish to fertilizer factories at about \$2 a thousand than in smoking them or packing them in brine.³⁵

The Ferry Landing fishing shore, purchased by George Washington in 1769 from his impecunious neighbor Captain John Posey who had operated the ferry across to the Maryland shore since 1753, would, a century later, be owned by another fisherman, Captain William Neitzey, whose reminiscences have been made available through the courtesy of his great-nephew Mr. Joseph Maurice Neitzey of Fairfax County. In 1906, Captain Neitzey wrote down the story of his life. It is reproduced here as he wrote it. The supernumerals and the words in italics are the editor's.

"I came to America with my father, mother and six brothers including myself in the year 1832. I remember living on the Rhine River near the city of Hesse Cassel. When our family left the old country we embarked in a boat on the Rhine, and in two days from the time of sailing we reached the port of Bremen. We remained at Bremen for several days and then embarked in a sailing vessel for America, and landed in Baltimore for about a year and then moved to Washington. I worked on the Chesapeake and Ohio canal and also drove a horse and cart. I remember President Andrew Jackson's second inauguration. I was then driving a horse and cart at the Capitol grounds.³⁶ When the oath of office was administered to President Jackson a cannon salute was fired, and the report of the cannon frightened my horse. My foot was trampled on by the horse and injured. The inauguration of President Jackson was very simple. They did not in those days have thousands of soldiers to act as escorts. Jackson's escort consisted only of a few marines from the navy yard and a few carriages."

Captain Neitzey relates the following anecdote, showing how democratic was the hero of New Orleans. President Jackson frequently rode horseback and he was not very particular about his clothes or his appearance. He looked like a successful farmer with the military bearing of a general. On one occasion he visited one of the Washington Markets for the purpose of buying a cow. After selecting a cow he accepted the price asked by the owner (to whom he was unknown) and said "Tie a rope around the cow's neck and bring her up to the White House." The President then rode away without divulging his identity. The cow was promptly delivered at the White House to the person who purchased it at the market. The party who sold the cow, after having been paid, said "I have heard a great deal about President Jackson and would like to see him and shake his hand." Jackson merely smiled and said "Sir, you sold your cow to him, he has paid you and you have been talking to him for some time. I am President Jackson."

"These were the days of democratic simplicity when the humblest in the land could at any time see and talk with the President, but Washington City since has grown and the times have changed.

I saw the first railroad train that passed over the Baltimore & Ohio RR. The train of cars did not come into Washington City then. They came as far as Hyattsville. The passenger cars were quite small and they ran on very narrow tracks. Lots of people were at Hyattsville to see the train and cars, and I was among them. I remember the great patent office fire and was present when the building was destroyed. I remember the Know-Nothing riots of Washington, the destruction of the stone presented by the Pope of Rome which was to have been placed in the Washington Monument, and the dispersal of the rioters by the U.S. Marines and capture of their cannon which had been loaded with nails, spikes and old iron. The riot took place at the Northern Liberty Market. I was present when the Union soldiers retreated over the Long Bridge after the Battle of Bull Run and I can imagine that I can see them running now. Those of the soldiers that were not badly injured were badly scared. And it was thought that the Rebels would march upon Washington. I remember Lincoln's inauguration and his assassination at Ford's Theatre. The city was full of soldiers and orders were given to drape all the houses. Those who failed to drape their houses were considered as rebels and feeling against the South and Booth was very strong. I remember the review of the Army after the war. At that time Pennsylvania Avenue was like a marsh, and in marching the soldiers would sink up to their ankles in mud. I remember the time when ducks were so plentiful on the Potomac River that in flying they would darken the light of the sun. I have lived through the administration of nineteen presidents of the United States and have seen what was practically a wilderness, with few houses, scattered here and there, grow into a great and beautiful city. The streets at night are now as bright as day. The moon is not now needed to lead us to our neighbors' houses, as it was in my early days. There are now no mud holes to sink knee deep into as was Pennsylvania Avenue during the War. Now Washington has the finest streets in the world.

Just before the Battle of Bull Run I loaned a beautiful horse to a sutler in the Union Army. The sutler was going to make so much money that when he returned he would buy me ten times more than the value of the horse. So I took the chance and the sutler took the horse. A few days afterward I met my friend coming across the Long Bridge but the horse was not with him. The Rebels got the horse and I never saw it again. The sutler, however, gave me an army pistol, in payment for the horse, as it was the only thing of value that he possessed outside of his clothing. I still have the pistol and consider it government property, and if the government would like to have it, they can pay the price of the horse and take the pistol, for the horse was supposed to be used in the service of the government.

In my lifetime I have seen the inventions of the steam engine and steam boat superseding the sailing vessel and canal boat, of coal taking [the place]

of wood as fuel, of matches taking the place of flint and tallow dips; of telegraph and telephone lines, illuminating gas, electricity used for power and illuminating purposes, the art of photography, the X-ray, the phonograph, submarine boats, wireless telegraphy etc. It seems to me but yesterday when all these great inventions came into use. Some years ago I saw the first government's test of the submarine boat in the Potomac River, and only last summer I saw an airship sailing through the air in perfect control, pass around the Washington Monument, thence to the White House, and then down Pennsylvania Avenue to the Capitol, after which it returned to its starting point. When I saw this air-ship I concluded that nothing was impossible of accomplishment by the aid of invention, and that in a shorter life span than mine has been, people will ride through the air with as much ease and unconcern as they now cross the ocean on an ocean liner, making the trip in six days which required more than three months to accomplish by sailing vessel in my boyhood days. I tell you nothing is impossible.

Speaking of presidents from Jackson to Roosevelt, I have seen every one of them. Lincoln I have seen many times. The first coal I ever saw in Washington was brought to the city in a Pungey boat. The pungey [sic] contained about forty tons of coal. Coal was then as rare as diamonds are now, and was looked upon as a curiosity. This is not surprising, for at this time wood was generally used as fuel by steamboats, in the United States Capitol, government buildings, etc.

I remember the first telegraph line from Baltimore to Washington. A large crowd of Washingtonians had gathered for the purpose of sending and receiving messages, and a great many of the people were inclined to laugh at the idea of a message being sent or received over a wire. One man in the crowd who had more faith than some others, said "Send me a message to Baltimore for a pair of boots, and let's have them quick." The sender of the message thought the boots would come over the wires and was disappointed when he did not see the boots traveling over the wires from Baltimore to Washington."

William Neitzey was for many years a successful fisherman. Stony Point on the Potomac was one of his most productive fishing shores. A notice in the Alexandria Gazette for March 21, 1891 announced that, to begin the fishing season, Captain Neitzey "will haul about 600 fathoms at Stony Point and 1000 fathoms at Ferry Landing." His reminiscences include a detailed account of his fishing enterprises.

"This shore [Stony Point] originally was worked with fifteen men. At each haul we caught a boat-load of fish, consisting of herring, shad, rock, perch, etc. Shad and herring always had a ready market, but such fish as rock, perch, etc. were not in demand and they were always thrown away. Now these fish bring good prices and are always in demand. The first net used at



Largest seine in the world. This seine, operated for shad and alewives at Stony Point, Virginia, on the Potomac River, was the longest net of the kind. The net proper was 9,600 feet in length, and the hauling ropes at the ends were 22,400 feet long, giving 32,000 feet as the total sweep of the seine, only one end of which shows in the illustration. The seine was hauled by steam power and the labor of 80 men, and was drawn twice daily, at ebb tide, throughout the season, and 250,000 alewives were caught at one time. Recently the season's yield of shad fell to 3,000 and the fishery was consequently discontinued in 1905 after having been carried on for a century. This seine was a source of eggs for the Bureau's shad hatchery on this river. The seine was owned and operated by Captain William Neitzey—ed. Dept. of Commerce and Labor. Bureau of Fisheries. Bulletin volume XXVIII 1908 part 2 plate CLII, Washington, GPO 1910. Proceedings of the Fourth International Fishery Congress held at Washington USA September 22-26, 1908.

this shore was 200 fathoms. This was forty or fifty years ago. In later years I fished Stony Point on a larger scale, and I believe at that time I had the largest fishing shore in the United States; 1600 fathoms of rope and net were required to fish this shore, and it took seven hours to make a haul. Two hauls were made every twenty four hours. I employed during the fishing season about 100 men. Eight horses were used for drawing in the net, but later I used steam power and dispensed with the horses.³⁷ I have caught as many as 500,000 herring and 10,000 shad in one haul. At one time I fished three shores in one season—Freestone Point, Stony Point, and Ferry Landing. I

considered Ferry Landing one of my best fishing shores, but this was before the Johnstown Flood."

Another Neitzey family member sailed the Potomac about this time. In E. W. Beitzell's Life on the Potomac River is a list of sailing vessels on the Potomac in mid-19th century: Schooner Bachelor, Henry Neitzey, Captain (p. 138-9); Sloop H. Day, Henry Neitzey, Captain (p. 146-7). Both vessels were out of D.C., and both were seized by the Navy during the Civil War.

"I have been burned out five times. At one time I lost \$50,000 worth of rope and net which I had stored in Washington and which was completely destroyed by the fire. There was not a penny's worth of insurance, and its destruction was therefore a total loss to me. I was not discouraged, however, and considered my loss a fisherman's luck, and began all over again. I furnished fish to all the leading hotels of Washington: Willard, National, Brown's etc. Ferry Landing I purchased from the Washington heirs during the Civil War. It is part of the original Mount Vernon estate."³⁸

A Neitzey family legend claims that a ghost haunts the house at Ferry Landing. Captain Neitzey, when building the house, brought bricks from the old D.C. Jail in his fishing boat when the jail was being torn down. The jail had been the Old Capitol Prison during the Civil War. Mary Surratt had been kept there the night before she was hung as a conspirator in the assassination of President Lincoln. Later residents of the house, which is still in the Neitzey family, claim they have heard Mrs. Surratt weeping and dragging her chains.

A tragic incident which occurred at Ferry Landing was reported in the Alexandria Gazette October 1, 1894: "Fred Neitzey of D.C., a nephew of Captain William Neitzey, while visiting his uncle, was bitten by a rabid dog and died of hydrophobia Thursday last."

"My father and mother are buried in the Congressional Cemetery. All of my brothers are dead. I have one sister living and she was born in the United States. I have been a hard worker all of my life, have taken care of my health and have not been a drinking man. I attribute my long life to plenty of hard outdoor work and at age 82 I am still strong enough to do work around my farm and use an ax on a log of oak wood."

Captain William Neitzey died October 25, 1908. His obituary in the Evening Star on October 26 reads, in part:

Captain William Neitzey Dead
Foremost Fishing Shore Operator on Potomac
Owned Biggest Seine in America
Resident of Washington for Seventy-Five Years

Captain William Neitzey, one of the oldest residents of the southwest section of the city, and for many years the foremost fishing shore operator on the Potomac River, died at his home at 470 M St. Southwest at 1:20

o'clock yesterday afternoon. . . . Captain Neitzey had been suffering for about two years from a complication of diseases, but until about a week ago he was able to be about. His wife, who was Miss Caroline Bannister, two daughters, Mrs. Mary Faunce and Miss Isabelle Neitzey, and three sons, William M., John F., and George Neitzey, survive.

Captain Neitzey was born near the city of Hesse Cassel, Germany, over eighty years ago and came to America with his father and brothers in 1832, landing at Baltimore. The family remained in Baltimore for about a year and then moved to this city, which has been the home of Captain Neitzey ever since . . .

After reaching man's estate Captain Neitzey turned his attention to fishing in the river . . . His first net was a small gill net of a few hundred feet long. His business expanded and during his career as a fisherman he operated the biggest haul seine ever used in the United States, if not in the world. This net was fished at Stony Point on the Potomac until about ten years ago. The net itself was nine miles long and with the end ropes carried about fourteen miles. In this net a half million herring and 10,000 shad had been caught at one time.

Many years ago he purchased a portion of the George Washington Estate on the Virginia side of the lower Potomac and manufactured there the largest fishing net in the world. This shore was a portion of General Washington's estate and was fished by his slaves in the eighteenth century. Views of Captain Neitzey's fishing quarters and seine at Stony Point won a gold medal at Chicago in 1893. He was an authority on fish and the methods of taking them, and was often consulted by the government authorities as an expert.

His funeral, which will be held under Masonic auspices, will take place at 3 o'clock tomorrow afternoon. Interment will be in Prospect Hill Cemetery.

NOTE: The editors would like to thank Mr. Stephen H. Taub, Senior Fishery Biologist, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service—ARL, SQ A20, Washington, D.C. and Mrs. Violet J. Catrow, Technical Information Services, National Fisheries Research Center, Kearneysville, West Virginia, for providing access to their libraries and research materials.

Notes

LRLS	—	Land Records of Long Standing
FDB	—	Fairfax Deed Book
FWB	—	Fairfax Will Book
FCFF	—	Fairfax Chancery Final File
PWLC	—	Prince William Land Causes

¹ The manuscript was written in 1906. A copy was presented to Ms. Edith Sprouse by Mr. Joseph Maurice Neitzey, a great-nephew of Capt. William Neitzey.

- ² E. W. Beitzell, *Life on the Potomac River*, c. 1968, 1973:88. In 1963, one of these weirs was uncovered when bridge piers were removed along the Washington waterfront.
- ³ *Ibid*:89.
- ⁴ PWLC 1789-1793, *Alexander vs. Birch*.
- ⁵ *Ibid*:230.
- ⁶ *Ibid*:252.
- ⁷ *Ibid*:272ff.
- ⁸ In the vicinity of Telegraph Road and I-95.
- ⁹ PWLC op. cit:286ff.
- ¹⁰ PWLC #9, *Stith vs. Mason*, 1819, deposition of Peter Coulter, age 70 years.
- ¹¹ FWB G.;254a (will of George Mason of Lexington).
- ¹² LRLS:236.
- ¹³ FDB R.;435, 438, 442.
- ¹⁴ George Washington, *Writings*, v. 33:176. George Washington Bicentennial Commission, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1931.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid*. v. 2:342n. 1 fathom = 6 feet.
- ¹⁶ FCFF #14f *Cropley & Co. vs. Whitall*, 1848.
- ¹⁷ FCFF #97n *Washington vs. Whitall*, 1851.
- ¹⁸ Frederick Tilp, *This Was Potomac River*, c. 1978:16, 17.
- ¹⁹ *Alexandria Gazette* May 13, 1878 quoting from *Martin's Gazetteer*.
- ²⁰ Beitzell, op. cit:90.
- ²¹ *Washington Star* June 17, 1917. "Rambler" article on Mt. Aventine.
- ²² U.S. Fish Commission. *Bulletin*, 1884 v.IV:61.
- ²³ Nan Netherton, editor, *Fairfax County, a history*, Board of Supervisors, 1978:264.
- ²⁴ *Alexandria Gazette* March 6, 1879.
- ²⁵ *Forest and Stream*, v. 6:231, 1876.
- ²⁶ Fairfax Circuit Court Archives. Inquests.
- ²⁷ U.S. Fish Commission. *Bulletin*, op. cit:125, 313.
- ²⁸ *Alexandria Gazette*, March 27, 1879.
- ²⁹ *Ibid*. May 19, 1859.
- ³⁰ *Ibid*. May 13, 1878.
- ³¹ *Ibid*. March 22, 1880.
- ³² U.S. Commission of Fish and Fisheries. *Report of the Commissioner for 1872 and 1873*, part II:xxvii.
- ³³ U.S. Fish Commission. *Bulletin*, 1885:371.
- ³⁴ *Ibid*. 1882 v.II:389.
- ³⁵ *Washington Star*, June 15, 1913.
- ³⁶ The second inauguration of Andrew Jackson occurred in March, 1833. Captain Neitzey was about 9 years old at the time.
- ³⁷ The first use of steam power for laying the nets on the Potomac was documented in the *Alexandria Gazette* February 3, 1870: "The large boat used at Marsh Landing at the mouth of Occoquan, in laying out the seine, will be propelled this Spring by steam instead of by oarsmen."
- ³⁸ No deed was recorded in Fairfax County to William Neitzey from Washington's heirs during this period. About 65 acres were purchased by Neitzey from the heirs of Paul Hillman Troth in 1887 at Ferry Landing (Fx. DB H₃:505). It is possible that Captain Neitzey leased the fishing shore at an earlier time.



Wilmer McLean, courtesy of Appomattox Court House, National Historical Park.

Wilmer McLean: the Centreville years

by

Carol Drake Friedman

History books tell us that in an ironic twist of fate, Wilmer McLean was the inadvertent host at the beginning and at the end of the Civil War. Although he and his family were not present at the time, Union artillery fire during the first moments of the battle of First Manassas is said to have damaged the log kitchen at "Yorkshire," the McLean home on Bull Run.¹ In the days that followed, Confederate troops encamped on the property, and a large stone barn on the estate became a hospital for wounded soldiers. Relocating his family south to the quiet village of Appomattox Court House, McLean set himself in the path of destiny; for here, just four years later, Robert E. Lee surrendered his army to Ulysses S. Grant, the event taking place in McLean's parlor. The coincidence forever labeled McLean as "the man who could not escape the war," and thus bestowed a vicarious immortality upon a man whose life might otherwise have gone unnoticed.

Before the Civil War, McLean spent over a decade as a resident of Fairfax County, much of that time in Centreville. The events and experiences that filled his life through that period are less known and less dramatic than his chance encounter with history. However, the manner in which McLean attempted to fulfill his aspirations and ambitions during those years offers valuable clues to his personality, character, and motivation; they give us an opportunity to know him better.

Who was Wilmer McLean? In a well-known photograph, apparently taken in mid-life, McLean's gaze does not meet us eye-to-eye. He enigmatically stares at a spot somewhere beyond the lens, a typical pose in the era of slow-lens photography. He is well-dressed and perfectly groomed, and he appears successful. Large, expressive eyes are his best feature, although few would

call him a handsome man, his nose being a bit too generous and his mouth too thin-lipped to be rated attractive. His penmanship was elegant, the script finely penned and flourishing, and his letters reveal good grammar and an extensive vocabulary. He was articulate and persuasive, and, as we shall see, women found him charming.

Wilmer McLean was born on May 3, 1814, the ninth of twelve children born to Daniel and Lucretia McLean of Alexandria, Virginia. His father was the owner of a successful bakery and a founder of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in that city. His childhood may not have been happy or secure, for he was orphaned at the age of eight and raised in the homes of various relatives, including the household of his older sister Lucretia and her husband James D. Kerr. Like his older brothers, he received a good education, probably at the Alexandria Academy, although he could have attended any one of the many small private schools that existed in Alexandria during those years.²

As a youth, Wilmer was introduced to the grocery business through his brother-in-law, James D. Kerr, who operated the "Kerr and Fitzhugh" wholesale and retail grocery establishment in Alexandria with his partner, Norman R. Fitzhugh.³ Anthony McLean, Wilmer's older brother, was a clerk in the company by 1829,⁴ and after Fitzhugh died in 1835,⁵ he became a full partner in the business.⁶ At that time the firm was renamed "Kerr and McLean." Wilmer may have worked in the business, perhaps as a clerk or accountant after his brother became a co-owner, for within a few years, he believed he had learned enough about the business to establish a branch grocery store in Centreville in partnership with them. He may have used money that he had inherited from his father's estate to handle his share of the investment, although there is some evidence that suggests his share may have been advanced by his brother and brother-in-law.⁷ The three-way partnership thus formed between James Kerr, Anthony McLean and Wilmer McLean was in the Centreville store only; the Alexandria business remained a dual partnership.⁸

We have no way of knowing who came up with the idea of a Centreville store, but as the new establishment was named "Wilmer McLean and Company" it seems likely that the idea was Wilmer's. If so, his ability to persuade an experienced businessman like James Kerr to invest in this branch store must have been exceptional, for Alexandria and Fairfax County were experiencing very difficult times. A long-standing agricultural decline, exacerbated by a severe national depression, had dragged the economy to an all-time low in the early 1840s. Cash was practically non-existent. Everyone operated on credit, and most citizens were deeply in debt. Furthermore, the population had been experiencing a steady decline during the previous ten years, as inhabitants emigrated, hoping to find better prospects in the new western states. Considering the state of the economy, investing the large sum of

money required for stocking a new store was a risky venture indeed. Nevertheless, the branch store in Centreville did open for business, probably in late 1843, with Wilmer McLean as proprietor.⁹

Moving to Centreville, McLean took up residence in the home of an elderly lady named Margaret Morris, the widow of John Morris. No doubt McLean boarded with Mrs. Morris because she had an available room and her house was conveniently located in the village; they were not relatives. The Morris's had been residents of Alexandria before moving to Centreville in 1807 or early 1808.¹⁰ They still owned property there when John died in 1826, but it seems unlikely that they would have been acquainted with Wilmer McLean, who was born in 1814, long after their move to Centreville.

Evidently John and Margaret Morris were childless, as no offspring are mentioned in John's will, which was written on October 17, 1825 and proved on September 18, 1826.¹¹ In the will, he bequeathed his entire estate to his "beloved wife Margaret." It included, without reservation or conditions of any kind, a two-story brick house and lot on Henry Street in Alexandria, sixteen shares in the Bank of the Potomac, one and a half shares in the Little River Turnpike Company, their home on four and a half acres in Centreville "in which I at present reside, with all furniture and etc. belonging," three slaves named Mary, George and Alfred, and "all cash bonds, deeds in trust, and every species of property of which I may die possessed." Included in the will was a life interest in a two-story brick house on Royal Street in Alexandria, which would pass to John C. Mandrell, his friend and executor, after Margaret's death. Shortly before he died, John Morris added a codicil to his will, which provided for the emancipation of his three slaves after his wife's death.

Money arising from the rental of the two houses in Alexandria provided Margaret with a steady income, but on September 18, 1837, she sold the house on Henry Street.¹² Evidently, she had her eye on a piece of property closer to Centreville, for on June 16, 1838, Margaret bought a tract of land containing 269 acres bordering on the Fauquier and Alexandria Turnpike (now Rte. 29) at Willow Spring, a mile and a half east of Centreville.¹³ She bought the property at public sale for the deflated price of \$515.00 cash, her bid through a third party being the highest. The former owner of this property, Humphrey Peake, was in financial ruin, as were many others during this period, and the sale had been forced by the Bank of Alexandria to whom he owed a substantial amount of money.

Margaret hired a man named William King to build a cabin, barn, and fences on the property at a cost of \$117.50, and named the tract Willow Spring Farm.¹⁴ On the first of January, 1841, Margaret leased the farm to Kitty Cornwell for the year. She was careful to conserve her assets, specifying in the agreement that Cornwell was not to cut wood from the woodlot. She also

gave instructions on what crops Cornwell should plant and how the farm should be maintained. Margaret was a good businesswoman, although she could neither read nor write; the agreement was written for her by Coleman Lewis, who was probably her friend and advisor in such matters.¹⁵ Margaret signed the document with an X.

Centreville was a languishing village in the early 1840s. Although it had once been a thriving town, the largest in the county and the commercial hub for western Fairfax and areas of Prince William and Loudoun Counties, it was now suffering through the same agricultural and economic decline that beset the entire Northern Virginia region. Margaret Morris was better off than most of the inhabitants of Centreville, not wealthy perhaps, but well-provided for. Taking in Wilmer McLean as a boarder was more likely a desire for company, rather than a real need for money.

The economy did not improve during the next few years, forcing the closure of many businesses in Fairfax County and the surrounding area. The firm of Kerr and McLean was piling up serious debts in Alexandria, and Wilmer McLean's store in Centreville was having problems getting local farmers to pay their store accounts.¹⁶ Everything appeared to be on a downward slide. However, the relationship between Wilmer McLean and his landlady Margaret Morris had warmed considerably. On March 28, 1844, Mrs. Morris deeded ninety acres of her Willow Spring Farm to Wilmer McLean for the token sum of one dollar.¹⁷ She says in the deed that the transfer of property was "in consideration of the natural love and affection which I bear to Wilmer McLean . . ." It was a generous gift.

Just three months later, on June 25, 1844, Margaret Morris called together several witnesses and drew up her last will and testament. This time she did not ask her old friend Coleman Lewis for advice or assistance, but apparently relied on her witnesses, John DeBell, Benjamin F. Rose, and L. D. Butler, who were businessmen in the town of Centreville. Once more, she signed the document with her mark. The wording of the will announces that she is "feeble in body but of sound mind and disposing memory," and appoints "her esteemed friend Wilmer McLean" as sole executor and only heir.¹⁸

In light of the fact that she made this will, which, upon her death, would give McLean all of her properties, as well as all of her personal estate, it seems unusual that only a year later she would feel the need to transfer any further property to him. Yet, on October 15, 1845, "in consideration of her attachment and regard for the said Wilmer McLean," she "sold" him the remainder of Willow Spring Farm, some 179 acres, for five dollars.¹⁹ With this transaction, Willow Spring Farm, all 269 acres, the buildings, and the rental income from the property, now belonged to McLean.

Obviously, Mrs. Morris had become very fond of McLean. Her actions appear doting, perhaps anxious to please. How had McLean earned such

affection—and largess—in the short time that he boarded at her home? Surely, he had to have been solicitous, companionable, and attentive to elicit such regard from the elderly, and probably lonely, widow. Regardless of whether his feelings toward her were genuine or ingratiating, she undeniably found him charming. Perhaps, being childless, she had come to think of him as the son she never had.

Although he was now the owner of Willow Spring Farm, McLean did not take up residence there, but continued to live with Mrs. Morris in her Centreville home; apparently, both parties were happy with the arrangement. Ignoring the fact that his partners were pressing him for payment of debts owed to the floundering firm of Kerr and McLean in Alexandria, he began to take on some of the duties that society in that era expected of educated and upstanding members of the community; witnessing legal documents for local inhabitants and appraising the estates of recently departed neighbors. He seemed to be settling in as a Fairfax County citizen when he served as a juror at the Fairfax Circuit Superior Court on June 7, 1845.²⁰

But ignoring obligations did not make them disappear. By the end of 1845, James Kerr and Anthony McLean were so deeply in debt that they had no alternative but to close their business and place their accounts in the hands of a receiver. They undoubtedly informed Wilmer of their decision, as the action would force an accounting of the partnership in Wilmer McLean & Company, which now owed a hefty \$6,175.50 to the Alexandria company.²¹ There is no indication that Wilmer attempted to pay any portion of this debt, nor did he try to settle a huge personal debt of \$2,300.00 that he owed to his partners.

On February 7, 1846, James D. Kerr and Anthony McLean signed the necessary legal papers to place their tangled business affairs in the hands of attorney Thomas R. Love, who would attempt to collect debts and pay off creditors, of which there were a considerable number.²² The financial statement filed with the court shows a total debt of \$12,616.84 plus interest, and assets of \$15,501.29, plus an as yet undetermined figure. Debts included loans owed to various friends and businessmen amounting to \$1,170.00, notes of \$5,400.00 to other business concerns, and over \$6,000.00 in notes to The Farmers Bank of Alexandria, the Bank of Washington, the Bank of Potomac, and the Bank of Metropolis. Apparently, the partners had borrowed from every available source to stay in business.

It was a formidable debt, especially as the assets were almost entirely composed of delinquent accounts owed to the firm of Kerr and McLean. Foremost were the two sums owed by Wilmer McLean, which together came to \$8,475.50. Patrons of the Alexandria store owed \$7,025.79, which they were unable or unwilling to pay. At best, these accounts would be hard to collect, if they could be collected at all. The only other assets listed were Kerr

and McLean's interest in the Great Hunting Creek Bridge Company, for which no value is given, and their interest in the firm of Wilmer McLean & Co. at Centreville and in the property of, and debts owed to, that firm (as yet undetermined).

One cannot help but wonder why James Kerr and Anthony McLean jeopardized their Alexandria business by allowing Wilmer to amass such a debt. The \$8,000.00 that Wilmer owed to them amounted to three-quarters of the \$12,000.00 debt that forced their business into receivership. Had this debt been paid, or never contracted, they might have been able to remain in business. Undoubtedly they had expected the Centreville store to be profitable, or at least hoped that it would be, and they had obviously believed in Wilmer's ability to manage the Centreville business wisely and successfully, but they had seriously misjudged the economic climate and the temperament of their partner. It was an error that brought calamitous results. The doors to their store in Alexandria were closed, and Thomas R. Love took over the tedious legal task of soothing creditors and instituting suit against those who were in debt to the firm. Wilmer McLean was advised to provide Kerr and McLean with detailed accounts of the Centreville business and to make a settlement with his partners.

Regardless of the admonition, Wilmer McLean did not provide an accounting of the Centreville business, nor did he close the Centreville store.²³ Instead, he continued to transact business until he was able to sell all the stock on hand. McLean gave some of the money from the sale of merchandise to Thomas Love, and informed him that he had used the rest of the funds to settle the debts owed by Wilmer McLean & Co. However, Love continued to uncover debts that had been contracted by the company that had not been paid.

Next, Wilmer brought suit against a number of Centreville area residents who owed store accounts, and in several instances succeeded in obtaining judgments against them.²⁴ Presumably, McLean was attempting to pay debts that he owed to Love as trustee for Kerr and McLean, although records do not indicate that monies derived from the judgments were used for that purpose. In any case, enough money to pay the large debt owed could not possibly be realized in this way.

Although Kerr and Anthony McLean were in dire financial difficulty partly due to Wilmer's debts, the family relationship may have been strained but it was not ruptured. In September 1847, Anthony McLean found himself in such reduced circumstances that he was forced to borrow \$500.00 from Ann Mackason, his mother-in-law, who lived in Burlington, New Jersey. To guarantee repayment of the loan, he placed his household and kitchen furniture in the hands of a third party, who would, if necessary, sell the property to reimburse Mrs. Mackason. The third party was Wilmer McLean.²⁵ As there

are no records of a public sale of this property, we must assume the debt was either paid or excused.

The following spring, on April 19, 1848, Wilmer bought a 218-acre farm named Spring Grove from Thomas and Susan Davy.²⁶ The property straddled the boundary line between Fairfax and Loudoun Counties. He gave Davy three promissory notes of \$166.66 each, payable in annual installments, the first due on Jan. 1, 1849, and the last on Jan. 1, 1851. Whether or not this amount was the total selling price cannot be ascertained, as the figure was omitted from the recorded deed. The same day, McLean mortgaged Spring Grove to Lawrence B. Taylor for \$500.00 to secure future payment of the debt to Davy.²⁷ Evidently, McLean had other purposes for this money, as it was not used to pay Davy.

One day later, on April 20, for the sum of \$1,500.00, McLean sold Spring Grove to his nephew, James Kerr Jr., as trustee for Lucretia Kerr.²⁸ As the deed reads, the property was for the "sole and separate use of Lucretia, the wife of James Kerr Sr., free from the power and control of her husband, as if she were unmarried." Most likely, buying this property in the name of James Kerr Jr. and placing it under Lucretia's control was a legal maneuver by James D. Kerr Sr. to secure some property beyond the reach of creditors. Perhaps Kerr wished to safeguard a home for his wife in case their home in Alexandria was forced into public sale to pay debts. Whether McLean merely acted as an unpaid agent for his sister and brother-in-law in this transaction or whether he made a profit from the sale is unclear.

Throughout this period Thomas Love was struggling to settle the accounts of Kerr and McLean's failed business, but Wilmer remained unwilling to provide any details of the now defunct Centreville store.²⁹ McLean still lived with Mrs. Morris, who despite having made her will in 1844, was apparently in good health in 1848. Beyond dunning local inhabitants for bills they still owed to Wilmer McLean & Co., Wilmer had no occupation and no income. But he was not idle. In fact, he was quite busy—ardently courting a young lady who lived in Jefferson County, Virginia (now West Virginia).

Her name was Ruth Annabelle Hurst, but she was called Annabelle or Belle by family and friends. No photographs of her have been found, so there is no way to know if she was pretty or plain, but letters written by Wilmer McLean suggest she was not a strong or healthy girl. In the summer of 1848 she was 25 years old, and Wilmer McLean was 34. Annabelle was the daughter of William and Mary (Shirley) Hurst, of Hurston, the family estate near Charles Town.³⁰

William Hurst was a wealthy man, a shrewd land speculator and mortgagee, whose grandfather, James Hurst, originally of Fairfax County, had claimed his father's warranted lands in Berkeley County before 1801, the year that portion of Berkeley became Jefferson County.³¹ James increased

his property holdings in Jefferson County during the following years.³² In 1805 he became acquainted with the Washington family when he purchased a tract of land from George Steptoe Washington.³³ While James Hurst had acquired a significant amount of land, these holdings were increased in succeeding generations by his son John and grandson William Hurst.

Several of George Washington's brothers had settled in Jefferson and Berkeley Counties, and William Hurst was a friend and neighbor of several of their descendants. Annabelle was probably a friend of Hannah Lee Washington, the daughter of Bushrod C. Washington, who lived at nearby Claymont, for Annabelle spent a considerable amount of time there.³⁴ Hannah Lee's cousin, Anne Maria T. B. Washington Alexander, the daughter of John A. Washington II, also was a likely acquaintance. She lived less than a mile from Claymont at the family home called Blakely. Perhaps the friendship with these Washington families was the impetus that prompted William Hurst, on January 9, 1840, to name his youngest daughter Julia Washington.³⁵

Annabelle Hurst and Wilmer McLean may have been introduced to each other by a mutual acquaintance, although just when and how they met is not certain. Although they were not social equals, Wilmer may have known Dr. William Fontaine Alexander, the husband of Anne Maria Washington, who was a patron at the firm of Kerr and McLean in Alexandria.³⁶ Another possible and interesting connection is through the Hooe family. Wilmer's sister Catherine was married to Howson Hooe of Fauquier County,³⁷ and Annabelle's sister Jeanette married his relative, Dr. William Wallace, son of Howson Hooe Wallace of Fredericksburg.³⁸ Several friends and at least one member of the Cockerille family were mutual acquaintances of Wilmer and Annabelle. The Cockerilles, a well-known family in the Centreville area, probably traded at Wilmer's store before it closed.

However they met, the romance appeared to be approaching full bloom in August 1848, at least on McLean's part. He spent some time in Charles Town earlier that month and wrote to Annabelle on his return to Centreville, addressing his letter to her at Claymont, the Washington home in Jefferson County.³⁹

Centreville August 25th 1848

Dear Miss Belle

Several days have already elapsed since my arrival in Centreville and I have not yet performed my promise of writing to you. In consequence of my long absence from home, I found much requiring immediate attention on my return. I will not tell you *how* often since I left you, my thoughts have wandered back to the pleasant scenes and happy hours of my last visit to Jefferson, or how often I have—[two lines are cut from the letter here]—to

be quite a comfort to me. Shall I be so blest as to call the original my own? That is the question that perplexes me now. Ere this I hope you have conversed with your parents on the subject which so deeply interests me now. You can scarcely imagine the anxiety I feel to learn the result of that conversation. This state of suspense to me is terrible. I know and feel that it is no unimportant matter for you to cast your lot with one (almost a stranger) whose professions of ardent love and faithfulness till death are yet to be proven. Yet I am not without hope. I shall be very impatient for your reply to this, as I trust it will bid me "hope on." I cannot help flattering myself that the Impression I have made is rather favourable than otherwise. Our friend Mr. Cockerille, has been sick ever since he got home. My friends, that have seen me, tell me they never saw me looking as well. I expect to go to Washington next week, when I shall see Frank. I hope Mr. C. learned his fate before he left Jefferson. He stands it tolerably well. Miss A. insisted upon his keeping the ring she gave him, which he is wearing. The stage is in the village, I must stop.

Very truly & devotedly Yours
Wilmer McLean

Two passages in the letter suggest that Annabelle and McLean have only recently met. He refers to himself as "almost a stranger" to her, and expresses his confidence in having made a "favourable" impression. If accurate, McLean was certainly wasting no time in pressing his suit. There is a possibility that they had been corresponding for some time before this meeting, although no earlier letters have surfaced.

Annabelle's answer was not immediate, and when McLean did receive it, he was not entirely pleased with the contents. He replied in a few days, again directing his letter to Annabelle at Claymont:⁴⁰

Centreville September 27, 1848

My Dear Miss Belle

Your long looked for favor, My dear Miss Belle, reached me on the 24th instant, the unfortunate miscarriage of my last letter to you accounts for the delay, But I cannot see why you, so ready with your pen, should have been so tardy with your reply. The main and most important subject, you have not alluded to in the slightest degree namely—the result of your conference with your parents. Remembering your silence with regard to this matter—how can I say to my friends in Jefferson—when I may make another visit? Upon a reperusal of your letter, I find that it is merely "an apology for an answer," when may I expect the answer itself? I was quite provoked at your bringing your "apology for an answer" so speedily and so suddenly to a close—because it had "exceeded my letter in length." You ask whether your last letter is too friendly. By no means—a stranger would hardly imagine it to be written by—even a friend, but when the answer comes, I hope you will

make amends. How did Mr. Harris get your letter to deliver to you? There seems to be as much curiosity existing in Jefferson, respecting the matter concerning you and myself, as there is in this gossiping neighbourhood. But I hope ere long to accomplish my design, then rumor will have to find other subjects to speculate with.

I went to Washington a few days after I wrote you last, and was very much disappointed at not seeing Frank. I called at his father's, and was told he was in Jefferson. I sat an hour or two with his father and mother, they had a great many questions to ask, many more (indeed) than I could or would answer. I saw a letter on the mantelpiece, directed to Frank, from one of his Jefferson friends, a Lady, I think it was from Miss Annie. I saw your Cousin Richard Scott at our last courts, he was delighted with his trip to Jefferson, and congratulated me upon my choice. I said nothing to him that he could infer from, there was anything of an understanding between us.

Our friend Mr. Cockerille has (I think) entirely recovered from sickness. I think Cousin Annie's cool treatment had a tendency, somewhat, to produce chills, as the feavor generally succeeds the chills, I am disposed to think he is about contracting feavors. He is very anxious to know when I intend visiting Jefferson again, he often tells me I should go up soon. He says he intends to accompany me when I pay you a visit. I hope Miss Summers is better, take care and not fatigue yourself too much by sitting up. I hope you have Miss Kate to assist you. You request me to remember my promise, let me see what it was? I made one respecting Miss Belle, another your letters, another to write to you as soon as I got home. What else? I think there was something said about waiting until I came up to hear something else, was that it? It was my intention to visit you next week, but it will be out of my power. I have to attend Warrenton Court next week, then our Superior Court comes on the 24th October, so I will have to wait until after that date. I hope to answer your next letter before that time, when I will tell you the exact day.

Very truly and devotedly Yours

Wilmer McLean

P.S. If I can get off, I will be with you about the 8th Oct. please write soon.
Yours etc. W.M.L.

Unfortunately, Annabelle's letters to Wilmer McLean have not survived the years. However, in McLean's allusions to the wording and tenor of her recent letter, we perceive a demure and reticent Annabelle, whose upbringing demanded emotional restraint and adherence to the rules that society deemed proper for young women. McLean seems not to understand this. Thwarted at getting his way, and probably loathe to bear the town gossip if his courtship failed, he vents his frustration as vehemently as he dares, then he becomes chatty with news of friends and concern for Annabelle's health.

McLean planned to visit Annabelle in October, and probably did so, although how often he saw her or wrote to her during the following winter is

not known. He did write to her in March, this time addressing the letter to her in Charles Town.⁴¹

Centreville March 18, 1849

My Dear Miss Belle

When I look back to the date of our separation and reflect on the length of time that has elapsed without writing to, or seeing you, I feel the most poignant sensation of shame and regret. I will not aggravate the impropriety of my omission by amusing you with childish excuses, but candidly confess it has not been in my power to write to you before this (not that I have not thought of you every day, and almost every hour in the day, since I last parted with you). I was detained at Mr. Kerrs (on my way from Jefferson) about ten days, by his sickness. On my way from there my horse fell down with me, and sprained my thumb, so bad, I have not been able to write since with any ease. I have not been out of the house for more than three weeks, owing to the illness of my old friend Mrs. Morris, who is now very ill. I throw myself on your kindness to excuse this omission, to renew our interrupted correspondence, and must entreat you not to consider me as deficient in love for you, though appearance goes so far towards my condemnation in that particular. I beg it with a good grace, but as my ease of mind depends on it, I must request you to favour me with an answer to this as soon as possible. I hope to see you soon. I hope you excuse this scrawl, it is as much as I can do to hold my pen. If you will please present my respects to your Father & Mother and believe me your faithful and affectionate lover

Wilmer McLean

This letter is almost completely written in McLean's usual flourishing handwriting, but when one examines the letter closely after learning of his injured thumb, the opening and closing lines do reveal a slight irregularity in style. His seclusion at home with the ailing Mrs. Morris indicates that he was caring for her, but it is more likely that her servant Mary, if still living, was actually attending her. McLean was undoubtedly attentive during Mrs. Morris' illness, and she was surely comforted by his constant presence—she was very devoted to him. However, her health did not improve, and she died a few months later. On June 18, 1849, her will was probated in Fairfax County Court. As provided in her will, she was buried in a grave beside her late husband. Though Wilmer McLean was Margaret Morris' executor, no settlement was ever recorded. As sole heir, he inherited her entire estate.

McLean must have received a forgiving and inviting response from Annabelle after his apologetic and promising letter, for the courtship gained new strength. There was another meeting that summer in Jefferson, and another letter in August, directed once again to Annabelle at Claymont.⁴²

My Dear Miss Belle

After my promises of amendment, I cannot but be ashamed of myself that I should so soon give you fresh cause of complaint. Dear Belle, I know you will forgive me when you read my excuse. You know I was a little complaining when I left your house. I was taken much worse before I got to Smithfield, where I had to stop an hour or two. I met your Aunt in company with Miss Lucy and Kitty on their way to your neighborhood. I was very sorry I met them from home, as I intended stopping with them at their house until I was better. I went to --- [?], staying that night, and then stayed a week, most of the time very unwell, I assure you. I met with a number of friends and acquaintances there, among the number the Rev. Dutton. He was disposed to be very kind to me and insisted upon me to let him know if I got worse. I suppose I must extend my thanks to you Miss Belle, for his kindness to me. He several times spoke of my frequent visits to Jefferson, and hoped matters were going well. I asked him if he did not think they were, from my frequent and lengthy visits. He remarked that he thought all was right. I did not get home until yesterday week, and am now happy to inform you, I have entirely recovered.

Perhaps you will be a little surprised Dear Belle, when I tell you I had a conversation with your father before I left Jefferson (I thought it better to see him in person than to write to him) respecting our mutual wishes. I sincerely hope the conference you have had (or may have) with your mother may be as flattering as mine with your father. Happy I am to inform you he approved of our projected union, and fully satisfied me I possessed his respect and affection. Were it not the case, he would not so readily resign to my protection, one of his greatest treasures. Dear Belle, I think we will be happy yet. In the course of conversation with your father, I remarked to him, I feared opposition from your mother, that she would not willingly give her consent to our union. I told your father I had not yet mentioned our intentions to your mother, but would do so when I visited Jefferson again. When I told your father, your mother (I was afraid would oppose our union) might oppose us, He remarked he supposed she thought your health might not be strong enough for you to undertake the management of your own household. At the same time led me to believe all obstacles would be removed.

To have a real friend to whom I can communicate my secrets, and who, on all occasions is ready to sympathise with me, is what I never have experienced. All these benefits, my Dear Belle, I expect to meet with in you. My principal care shall be to do everything possible to please you. To try by idle fallacies and airy compliments to prevail on your judgment, is folly for any man to attempt who knows you. No, Miss, your good sense and endowments have raised you far above the necessity of practising the mean artifices, which prevail upon the less deserving of your sex. I hope time will not impair the impression, which I fondly hope I have made on [y]our heart.

With respect to my own feelings, I can assure you that they are more alive than ever to your merits and charms. Let me entreat you, therefore, not to keep me in suspense; but, by returning a favourable answer, grant me the delightful satisfaction of knowing that I may call you my own, and begging that you will not protract the time of our happy union. Please hand the within to your father, or to Mr. Gibson who will. I want to be with you next month. You[r] letter will determine what time. I hope you will be as punctual as you were the last time you wrote, but not so short.

I remain my Dear Belle Yours

Wilmer McLean

Here our knowledge of the courtship of Wilmer McLean for the hand of Annabelle Hurst ends. No later letters have been found. The romance may have continued for some time, but the marriage never took place. Just when and how it ended must be left to conjecture. We must believe that Annabelle cared for Wilmer McLean, else why should she have saved his letters, perhaps reading them over from time to time through the years? Annabelle remained single for the rest of her life. Though her family did not consider her a strong woman, she outlived McLean by a year, dying July 7, 1883 at the age of sixty.⁴³

For McLean, the future took a different path. Ten months after this letter was written, Dr. John Seddon Mason died at his home near Centreville, leaving a wealthy, thirty-two year old widow with three young children, who soon became the object of Wilmer's attention.⁴⁴

Mrs. Virginia B. Hooe Mason was the owner of the Yorkshire estate on Bull Run, a house and five acres in the village of Centreville, and other properties in Prince William and Fairfax Counties, all of which she had inherited from her father, Colonel John Hooe.⁴⁵ Virginia probably came to know McLean after her cousin Howson Hooe married McLean's sister Catherine. While theirs may have been only a nodding acquaintance, Dr. Mason and storekeeper McLean knew each other well.⁴⁶ Both lived in the Centreville area and had highly visible professions. There is also evidence that the Masons and McLean were fellow parishioners at St. John's Episcopal Church in Centreville.⁴⁷

Dr. John Seddon Mason graduated from the University of Maryland School of Medicine in 1836.⁴⁸ He married Virginia Hooe in 1839.⁴⁹ They built a house on the portion of the Yorkshire estate that was on the north side of Bull Run, in Fairfax County.⁵⁰ During the next nine years, three daughters were born; Maria Beverley in 1844, Osceola Seddonia in 1845, and Sarah Barber in 1848.⁵¹ Mason was considered an excellent physician and sometimes was called to attend patients after the ministrations of less qualified doctors had failed to affect a cure.⁵² It is not known if his death in the summer of 1850 was sudden or followed a prolonged illness.

We assume that Wilmer McLean allowed a proper mourning period to pass before initiating his courtship of Virginia Mason. Nevertheless, gossip in Centreville was surely even more rife than it had been during his pursuit of Annabelle Hurst; Mrs. Mason was a local and well-known heiress, with a fortune in her own right. Villagers knew McLean's business had failed. They were probably aware that he was deeply in debt because Thomas R. Love was actively pressing him to settle his accounts with the firm of Kerr and McLean—secrets are rare in a small village.

In March 1851, his patience finally exhausted, Thomas R. Love brought suit against McLean in Fairfax Chancery Court.⁵³ Love stated in the bill of complaint that "sufficient time has been allowed to the said Wilmer McLean to pay [the store debts] and transfer the balance due to Kerr and McLean." Love said he had "from time to time and repeatedly, in a friendly manner, urged upon the said Wilmer, a settlement," but that McLean has "either refused or evaded." He asked the court to force McLean "to render before a commissioner, a full and detailed statement of the partnership of Wilmer McLean & Co., and that he be compelled to pay any balance which is due." Wilmer McLean had been served with a summons to attend the hearing and answer charges. He did not appear.

Spring and summer passed and autumn was almost over, but no statement came from McLean. On the eighth of November, the Judge of the Fairfax Chancery Court, noting the failure of McLean to answer the bill of complaint, decreed that the charges against the defendant were to be taken as confessed. Two commissioners were appointed to settle the accounts of Wilmer McLean as one of the partners in the firm of Wilmer McLean and Company, and report to the court the balance due to James D. Kerr and Anthony McLean. The defendant, Wilmer McLean, was ordered to hand over to the commissioners "all books of accounts, vouchers, and all other papers relating to the partnership, and that he submit to be examined on oath, if required, on any matters touching or relating to the partnership." Again, McLean did not appear in court.⁵⁴

The accounting with Kerr and McLean could no longer be ignored or evaded. McLean, no matter how reluctant to face facts, had to settle with his former partners or go to jail for contempt of court. Presumably, he complied with the order to turn over all papers relating to the store, although his promptness in doing so cannot be learned. While the court commissioners labored over the ledgers to determine what he owed to the partnership, McLean turned his energy to other pressing matters.

Thomas Davy, from whom he had purchased Spring Grove in 1848, was demanding payment. Although this debt of \$500.00 was supposed to be paid in full by January 1, 1851, McLean had neglected to do so. It was now January 1852, and Lawrence Taylor, to whom McLean had mortgaged the property,

was in a position to legally sell Spring Grove at public sale to pay the debt to Davy. To add to the dilemma, McLean had sold Spring Grove to his sister Lucretia the day after he bought it from Davy. McLean could be sure that James and Lucretia Kerr would be extremely unhappy if their home were sold out from under them in this circumstance. The debt had to be paid.

Apparently, no other source of money was available to McLean, for on February 6, 1852, under pressure from Davy and Thomas Love, he sold Willow Spring Farm, the land he had been deeded by his old friend Margaret Morris.⁵⁵ The buyer was one William H. Curtis, who promptly paid McLean the agreed upon price of \$2,400.00. Without a day's delay, McLean paid Thomas Davy and received a release of the trust that Lawrence Taylor held on Spring Grove.⁵⁶ Considering the financial duress McLean was under, one wonders why he did not sell Willow Spring Farm sooner; he certainly needed the money. Perhaps McLean hoped to hang on to this property, as it provided rental income and was excellent collateral. Or perhaps he simply enjoyed being a landowner and the status that position afforded him.

Fairfax County's economic recovery is reflected in the price that McLean was able to realize in selling Willow Spring Farm. Margaret Morris had paid \$515.00 for the tract in 1838, just before the worst years of the depression. McLean was able to sell the property for five times that amount in 1852. The 1850s were good years in Fairfax County; prosperity had arrived with an infusion of northern capital and improved agricultural productivity.

By the summer of 1852, Wilmer McLean and Virginia Mason, if not already decided upon marrying, were at least contemplating the idea. Regardless of the fact that McLean was involved in an ongoing lawsuit, and despite his overwhelming debts and lack of material assets, Virginia Mason apparently found him charming.

In July, several months after McLean sold Willow Spring Farm, Virginia Mason sold her house and land in Centreville that she had inherited from her father.⁵⁷ The purchaser was Alexander S. Grigsby, a well-known entrepreneur in Centreville, who paid \$1,100.00 for the property. The records do not tell us why she sold the property at this time, but it was certainly not because she needed money. As a widow, Virginia made the sale herself, without the consent of a husband or trustee as would have been required if she were a married woman. Whether or not her family approved of the sale, there was nothing they could do about it.

Virginia Hooe Mason and Wilmer McLean were married at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Alexandria on January 19, 1853.⁵⁸ On the 18th, the day before the wedding, they signed a marriage contract that placed all of Virginia's property in the hands of Samuel Chilton, who was appointed her trustee. He would hold her properties, in trust, for her "sole separate and

exclusive use" and "freed absolutely from all liability for the debts present or future of said Wilmer McLean."⁵⁹ The contract listed Virginia's current holdings, and while precise acreage was not given, her property was indeed extensive. It included the Yorkshire estate, containing by estimation 1,200 acres, another tract in Prince William County containing "four or five hundred" acres, a tract in Fairfax County estimated at 330 acres, and thirteen slaves. Either on her own behalf or on the advice of family, Virginia Mason was protecting her property from McLean's debts and his imprudent ways with money.

After the marriage, McLean moved into Virginia's house on the Fairfax County portion of the Yorkshire estate. A week after the wedding, Wilmer sold his house and four and a half acres in Centreville for \$800.00⁶⁰ This was the home he had shared with Margaret Morris, and which she had left to him in her will. As far as can be determined, McLean settled down and became a gentleman farmer at Yorkshire, the land owned by his wife.

In 1856, he answered a letter that he had received from Thomas R. Love, who, as trustee, still hoped to collect McLean's debt to his former partners, as well as collect money owed to a Mr. Williams (this was a debt that was contracted by John Seddon Mason, and unpaid by Virginia).⁶¹

Written in McLean's familiar style, the letter reads.⁶²

Yorkshire Jan'y. 11, 1856

My Dear Sir

I received your last letter and intended answering it long before this, but expected to meet you at Brentsville last court, the inclemency of the weather of course prevented your coming. I will meet you any day, you may fix, at Lee's Station. You have waited so kindly with me up to this time, I am almost ashamed to ask a continuation. But really I am not prepared to pay you the balance on William's claim and your own. My wheat is not yet out, and I am afraid it will be several weeks before I get it to market. I have about 450 barrels of corn to get in yet, which is not gaining any being in the field. I will promise you faithfully to pay you, by the 10th or 12th of March, at that time I certainly will have funds, say nothing about wheat, corn or anything else. If you can indulge me to that time, I will add it to the many favours you have granted me. If I get my wheat in before I will be able to do for you sooner. There shall be no disappointment by March. Please write me the amount due Williams and yourself . . .

Your Friend
Wilmer McLean

McLean did not pay Williams' claim, and it was eventually dismissed by the court. The debt that Wilmer owed to Thomas R. Love, trustee of his

brother-in-law James D. Kerr and his brother Anthony McLean, may never have been fully paid, for a distinct coolness shadowed their relationship in later years.⁶³

Precisely where on the Yorkshire estate the McLeans were living at the time the battle of First Manassas commenced is unclear. Historians generally have accepted accounts that say the McLeans were living in a house on the south side of Bull Run, a house that McLean built in 1858.⁶⁴ McLean is known to have rented this house and several outbuildings to the Confederate Army on July 17, several days before the battle of First Manassas.⁶⁵ However, like many other homes in the area of Centreville and Manassas, there is the possibility that it was requisitioned and occupied as military quarters before that time. Where did the McLeans go? Perhaps to Virginia's house on the north side of Bull Run, in Fairfax County.

Virginia McLean apparently had a sentimental attachment to the house that was built by her first husband, for she did not sell it during her lifetime.⁶⁶ She lived there throughout her marriage to Mason, and she and McLean lived there until at least 1858. Testimony presented in Fairfax County Chancery Court in 1885, during a long-standing dispute involving the boundary of this property with that of the heirs of Daniel Kincheloe, suggests that the McLeans were living in this house when the hostilities began.

In a sworn deposition taken on November 9, 1885, Mrs. Sarah Wedderburn testified that she was personally acquainted with Virginia McLean, had known her for many years, that she knew her first husband, Dr. Mason, and had also known her father, Col. John Hooe.⁶⁷ Her statement says that she:

... well remembers being a guest at the house of said Dr. Mason on the Yorkshire estate some forty years ago—that said Mansion house was on this side of Bull Run in said Fairfax County, and that it and the adjoining land was in the possession of the said Dr. Mason and the said Virginia Mason for many years, and was used, claimed and occupied as their property—That said Mansion house was in fact so used and occupied until the commencement of the hostilities in the late war compelled the abandonment of the same by its occupants.

There were four children in the McLean household in July 1861; Virginia's two daughters, Maria and Ocie Mason, who were teenagers, John Wilmer McLean, familiarly called "Will," who was born in 1854,⁶⁸ and Lucretia Virginia McLean, born in 1857. Sarah, the youngest of the Mason daughters, died in 1857 at the age of eight.⁶⁹ Interestingly, Ocie Mason is reported to have carried information by horseback to General Ewell at Union Mills ford after conversing with Union soldiers who were constructing an abatis near their artillery position at the A. S. Grigsby farm on the morning of July 21. She inquired of the soldiers, "Why are you obstructing our road?"⁷⁰ As the Grigsby farm was adjacent to the McLean property on the north side of Bull

Run, the event tends to place the McLean family in Fairfax County and dangerously between the lines on the day of the battle.

It would have been prudent for Virginia McLean and the children to depart as the first Union troops arrived in the Centreville area on July 18, when it became clear that a battle was imminent. Juxtaposed between two hostile armies, some inhabitants hurriedly packed what they could and became refugees in safer places. Most moved in with relatives who lived beyond the battle zone, but not too far away; they wanted to be safe, yet close enough to keep an occasional eye on their property. Those with Union sympathies, and a few of Southern sentiment as well, chose Alexandria or Georgetown, either with family or as boarders. Fauquier and Loudoun Counties were convenient refuges for those who were fortunate enough to have family there. While it seems reasonable to assume that McLean took his family away from the battle arena before the fighting began, there is no evidence that he did so.

Wilmer McLean is known to have been in the Centreville area after the battle was over. Within a few months he was working for the Confederate Quartermaster, buying supplies in Richmond, then selling them at exorbitant prices to the army in Manassas.⁷¹ In early March of the following year, when the Confederates evacuated their army south, away from Centreville and Manassas, McLean also left the area. Apparently, he switched his theater of endeavor to Richmond, where he became a speculator in sugar, a scarce and expensive commodity during the war.⁷² In the fall of 1863, the McLean family was reunited in Appomattox Court House, in the house that was to become the stage for one of the most momentous dramas in our history.

Did McLean flee from the war, hoping to find a quiet haven in Appomattox, as some have suggested? Or did he follow the war, availing himself of the opportunity to profit from it? The answer lies in understanding the personality and motivation of Wilmer McLean. As revealed by his experiences during the Centreville years, McLean was not a man to ignore the prospect of financial gain.

The McLeans left Appomattox in debt a few years after the end of the war, probably in 1867. They returned to live for a brief time at the Yorkshire house in Fairfax County, for Virginia's daughter, Maria Beverley Mason, was married to Philip Lee at St. John's Episcopal Church in Centreville on January 20, 1869.⁷³ Land tax records for that year indicate they were living in Fairfax County. In later years, the McLean's son John W. and his wife Rosa lived in the house and raised a family of seven children there.⁷⁴

A visible connection to the McLean family remains in Centreville today; although Wilmer and Virginia were buried at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Alexandria, their son and several of his descendants are buried at St. John's Church in Centreville.

I wish to thank Claudette Ward and Lewis Leigh Jr. for generously permitting me to use letters from their collections, and I wish to thank the following for the many kindnesses they have extended to me during this and other projects: Constance Ring (Fairfax Circuit Court Archives), Anita Ramos, Brian Conley, and Marjorie Schoenberg (Virginia Room, Fairfax City Regional Library), and Don Wilson (Prince William County Public Library) . . . C.D.F.

Notes

Alexandria Deed Book — ADB
Fairfax Chancery Final File — FCFF
Fairfax Chancery Suspended File — FCSF
Fairfax Court Order Book — FCOB
Fairfax Deed Book — FDB
Fairfax Will Book — FWB
Jefferson County Deed Book — JDB

¹ Frank P. Cauble, *A Biography of Wilmer McLean*, first edition, Appomattox Court House National Historical Park, 1969.

² Ibid.

³ FCFF #57z, *Kidwell vs. Kerr and Fitzhugh* (1837). Anthony McLean's deposition.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Obituary of Norman R. Fitzhugh, *Alexandria Gazette*, October 2, 1835:3.

⁶ FCFF #36d, *Gantt vs. Kerr and McLean* (1845).

⁷ FDB K₃:145, 146.

⁸ FCOB 1847:164; FCFF #57o, *Kerr and McLean vs. Montanya, etc.* (1847).

⁹ Fairfax County Personal Property Tax records 1844, subscribed on July 11, 1844, the first time Wilmer McLean and Company appears in these records.

¹⁰ FDB H₂:202 (msg), FDB N₂:310, 335 (msg.). Deed Book Index lists these transactions.

¹¹ FWB O:193.

¹² ADB Y₂:313.

¹³ FDB D₃:598.

¹⁴ Term Papers, November 1851, *King vs. Morris*. Fairfax Circuit Court Archives.

¹⁵ Coleman Lewis lived on the property later known as Walney. He was the son-in-law of Coleman Brown whose father Thomas had established the estate.

¹⁶ FCFF #44o, *Thomas R. Love, etc. trustee vs. Wilmer McLean* (1851); FCOB 1842:157; FCFF #37b, *Grigsby vs. Allison* (1847).

¹⁷ FDB I₃:128.

¹⁸ FWB V₃:319,320.

¹⁹ FDB J₃:408.

- ²⁰ FCOB 1839:208; 1842:266.
- ²¹ FDB K₃:146.
- ²² Ibid:142-147.
- ²³ FCFF #440, op. cit..
- ²⁴ FCOB 1839:294, 309, 313; FCOB 1846:101, 121, 148, 201.
- ²⁵ ADB I₃:171.
- ²⁶ FDB M₃:350.
- ²⁷ Ibid:339.
- ²⁸ Ibid:395.
- ²⁹ FCFF #440, op. cit.
- ³⁰ Headstone, Edge Hill Cemetery, Charles Town, W. Va.; 1850 *U.S. Census* Jefferson County, Va.; Fairfax Harrison, "A Group of Northern Neck Families," *Tyler's Quarterly Magazine*, Vol. 1 (1919-1920):170, 171.
- ³¹ Harrison, op. cit.
- ³² JDB 1:25; 2:525; 4:398; 6:154; 7:102; 9:507.
- ³³ JDB 3:50.
- ³⁴ John W. Wayland, *The Washingtons and Their Homes*. McClure, 1944.
- ³⁵ Headstone, Edge Hill Cemetery, Charles Town, W. Va. Julia Washington Hurst died on August 20, 1850 at age 10; 1850 *U.S. Census*, Jefferson County, Va.
- ³⁶ FDB K₃:146.
- ³⁷ Obituary of Catherine McLean Hooe, *Alexandria Gazette*, August 6, 1859:3.
- ³⁸ Letter from Jeanie Wallace to her sister Annabelle Hurst, courtesy of Claudette Ward; *The Shepherdstown Independent*, Shepherdstown, W. Va., October 1, 1859:3.
- ³⁹ Letter from Wilmer McLean to Annabelle Hurst dated August 25, 1848. Courtesy of Claudette Ward.
- ⁴⁰ Letter from Wilmer McLean to Annabelle Hurst dated September 27, 1848. Courtesy of Lewis Leigh, Jr.
- ⁴¹ Ibid. March 18, 1849.
- ⁴² Ibid. August, 1849.
- ⁴³ Headstone, Edge Hill Cemetery, Charles Town, W. Va.
- ⁴⁴ John McGill, *The Beverley Family of Virginia*. R. L. Bryan, 1956. John Seddon Mason died June 24, 1850.
- ⁴⁵ FDB R₃:33; Prince William County land tax records.
- ⁴⁶ FCFF #37b, op cit.
- ⁴⁷ Interview January 31, 1991 with C. W. Fox, great-grandson of Wilmer and Virginia McLean; Eugenia B. Smith, *Centreville, Virginia: Its History and Architecture*. Fairfax County Office of Comprehensive Planning, 1978. St. John's Church was organized in 1844.
- ⁴⁸ Eugene Fauntleroy Cordell, "Virginia Students of Medicine at the University of Maryland" (excerpted from *Historical Sketch of the University of Maryland School of Medicine*). Excerpt published in *William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. XV:244,1907.
- ⁴⁹ FDB G₃:192 (marriage contract); McGill, op. cit.
- ⁵⁰ FCSF #19d, *Kincheloe's heirs vs. Kincheloe's admr.* (1868). Depositions of E.W. Kincheloe and Sarah Wedderburn; FDB C₆:387 (plat).
- ⁵¹ Cauble, op. cit:37.

⁵² FWB V:236.

⁵³ FCFF #440, op. cit.

⁵⁴ Ibid; FCOB 1847:164.

⁵⁵ FDB Q₃:396.

⁵⁶ Ibid:407.

⁵⁷ FDB S₃:380.

⁵⁸ Cauble, op. cit:39. St. Paul's Episcopal Church records.

⁵⁹ FDB S₃:380.

⁶⁰ FDB Z₃:202.

⁶¹ FCFF #101z, *Williams vs. Mason* (1851).

⁶² Ibid. Letter from Wilmer McLean.

⁶³ Cauble, op. cit:21, 32.

⁶⁴ Prince William County land tax records 1858.

⁶⁵ Cauble, op. cit:50.

⁶⁶ Interview with C. W. Fox, op. cit.

⁶⁷ FCSF #19d, op. cit.

⁶⁸ There has been some disagreement over the name of Virginia and Wilmer McLean's son. His headstone in the cemetery at St. John's Episcopal Church in Centreville reads: *John W. McLean 1854-1920*. According to his grandson, C. W. Fox, his name was John Wilmer McLean, although he was familiarly called "Will."

⁶⁹ Cauble, op. cit:37.

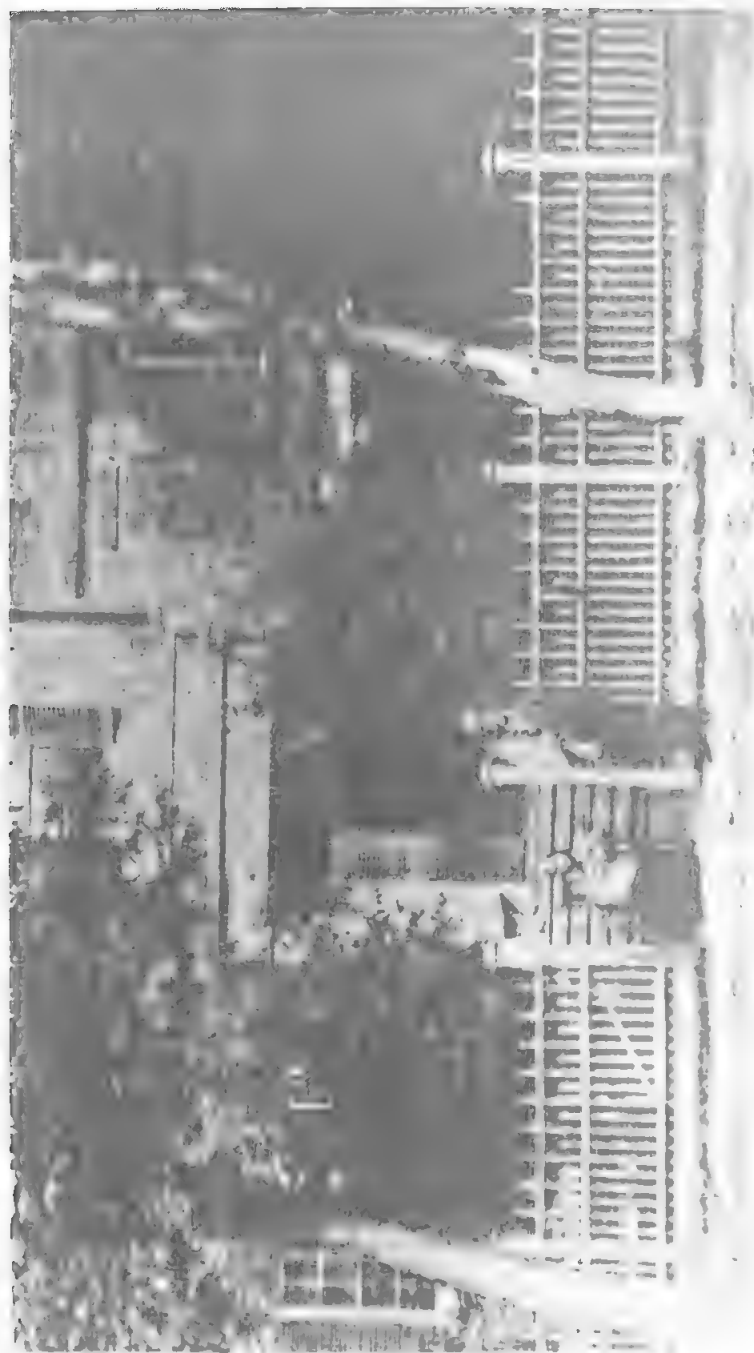
⁷⁰ Newton Martin Curtis, *From Bull Run to Chancellorsville; the story of the sixteenth New York . . .* P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1906:47-48.

⁷¹ Ibid:59.

⁷² Ibid:63.

⁷³ Marriage announcement, *Alexandria Gazette*, January 23, 1869:3; Fairfax County land tax, 1869.

⁷⁴ Interview with C. W. Fox, op. cit.



The Gannell (later Oliver) house circa 1870. Courtesy of Fairfax City Regional Library Photographic Archives.

Notes on the Oliver House

Notes of Mr. Robert W. Oliver for his presentation to the general meeting of the Historical Society of Fairfax County at the Fairfax County Courthouse, June 17, 1990

The house now occupied by the Bailiwick Inn at 4023 Chain Bridge Road, Fairfax, Virginia, known for most of the twentieth century as the Oliver House, was built on lot #16 of the original Town of Providence. The nineteen half-acre lots were laid out for Richard Ratcliffe, who owned the land, by deputy surveyor Robert Ratcliffe, in 1805. In 1812, when the lots were exposed to public sale by the Town trustees, Richard Ratcliffe bought back lots #4-19. Lots #8-15 were already built upon, and the remaining lots were to be improved within fourteen years. Lot #16 was allotted to Penelope Jackson, widow of Spencer Jackson, in the division of her father Richard Ratcliffe's estate after his death in 1825. In 1837, after Penelope's death, her town lots were sold at public auction. Lot #16 was purchased by her son Robert R. Jackson, who sold it to Edward Sangster. Sangster, in financial trouble, mortgaged the lot to Joshua C. Gunnell, who, by 1860, owned it. In 1901, Gunnell's descendants, of Lawrence County, Kentucky, sold the southern portion of lot #16, and all of lot #17, to Walter T. Oliver.

Editor

I am a retired attorney. I now live in Chevy Chase, Maryland. I was born in the house across the street 83 years ago, on May 8, 1907. Here are some facts about the house, originally known as the Gunnell House and later the Oliver House. I will refer to it simply as "the house."

1) The small front section was built about 1800—we are told the bricks came from England.

2) The large front section was built about 1832.

3) About 1899 *[sic]* my paternal grandfather bought the property as a wedding gift for my father and mother. He paid \$2500 for the entire property

which included the main house, a frame house, a large barn, and a brick out-building. The property encompassed half of the entire block.

4) The property stayed in our family for over 80 years. The house was occupied for 14 years, until 1983, by Us-Too Studio art gallery, now at 10364 Main Street. In June of 1980 we sold it to Herbert Aman who constructed the Joshua Coffey Gunnell office building on the back of the property.

5) Our house was the site of one of Northern Virginia's first telephone exchanges—located in Dad's law office in the small front section of the house.

- the switchboard was a small 40 line job, with cords and jacks
- Dad later sold out to M.E. Church who owned the Falls Church telephone exchange. Dad imposed the condition that he would receive free telephone service for life.
- Church later sold out to C & P, which refused to honor the free service condition.
- as fate would have it, my first legal position was in the legal department of the C & P Telephone Company. I had great fun threatening to write an opinion on behalf of the Company, upholding my father's claim. Incidentally, Alexander Graham Bell was a frequent visitor to Fairfax to see his friend Captain Henry who operated the old tavern, [*formerly Willcoxson's or the Union Hotel,*] now the site of Sovran Bank. I was introduced to Mr. Bell as the son of the owner of the town's first telephone exchange. While I was in the C & P Telephone Company, they got awfully tired of hearing me brag about having met Mr. Bell.

7) The house had one of the earliest self-generating gas light systems—we installed it in the early 1900's.

- the gas generator was located in the brick outhouse
- the gas was created by mixing carbide with water
- the gas was piped throughout the house in small pipes
- we scuttled the gas system when electricity came along

I now come to the story of the house and the Civil War. On June 1, 1861, the house played a part in the first engagement in the War that occurred in the field in back of this Court House. Captain John Quincy Marr, commander of the Warrenton Rifles was killed in action. Former Virginia Governor Billy Smith was a guest in the house. He was awakened and after a delay in finding his boots, he assumed command of the Warrenton Rifles. Incidentally, after the War, Smith was again elected Governor of Virginia which earned him the title of "Extra Billy Smith." The story of the house and the first skirmish of the War is told in the *Washington Post* article published on May 31, 1938, containing a picture of the house. There is reliable evidence the house was

used as a hospital during the Civil War. In the 1920's, we replaced the roof of the main section of the house. The contractor found in the attic, just below the roof, lots of antiquated medical equipment that was examined and believed to be of Civil War origin. After the War, the house became a gathering point for Civil War veterans who came to the Court House Close to celebrate Decoration Day (now called Memorial Day). My great uncle, Confederate Captain David Grayson, came to Fairfax every Decoration Day to join in the celebration. I remember him telling me that some of these old Confederate soldiers who returned to Fairfax for this event had been involved in the original skirmish in Fairfax in 1861. I remember my uncle bringing groups of these old soldiers over to the house for refreshments, and how brandy was substituted for cream in their coffee to keep them going for the rest of the day. I remember their old, faded and rumpled uniforms, the smell of moth balls, the out-of-tune local brass band that played, and how this annual event gradually diminished and died away as the attendance dwindled from year to year.

A number of Civil War bullets have been found in the garden area in back of the house. The largest find was during the recent excavation of the Joshua Coffey Gunnell building. People with metal detectors invaded the scene, and one of them gave me two bullets I show you now. I am told they are of genuine Civil War vintage. Many years ago, when I was a youngster, I found about a dozen of the round bullets while digging a hole in the garden to bury our pet dog. These were identified as Civil War bullets. I used them as master marbles, with a devastating effect on the marble competition in the village.

The cleaning out of the basement of the house, before we sold it in 1980, was like opening Pandora's box! For many years, the basement of the house had been a repository for everything imaginable. The relics found were too numerous to mention, but here are a few:

- 1) we found the remnants of the old telephone switchboard, in shreds
- 2) we found a very old Virginia law book given to my father by the University of Virginia for helping as a law student to save books when the Rotunda at the University was partially destroyed by fire. I now have this book in my library.

- 3) we found the old sleigh bells that once adorned the neck of our horse "Pat" as he pulled me around the streets of Fairfax in a 2-seated sleigh. (These bells are now in California, where they are used every Christmas Eve to excite my four grandchildren.

- 4) we found this No. 1 Virginia auto license tag for 1918, about which there is a story. In 1918 my father represented Northern Virginia in the State Senate. He was active in the gubernatorial campaign, and his candidate won the election. The No. 1 Virginia license plate is invariably assigned to the Governor. However, my father somehow inveigled the Governor-elect to let

him have the No. 1 license plate during the four years of the Governor's term. I have the plates for 1918 and 1922. I don't know what happened to the intervening ones. As we drove around in our car with this No. 1 license tag on it, Dad was often greeted as "howdy Gov!" The moral of this story is that if you can't get to be Governor, the next best thing is to get his No. 1 license tag! Incidentally, my father also got out of the Governor an appointment to the Board of Visitors of the University of Virginia, which is one of the most coveted appointments that a Governor of Virginia has to offer.

In closing, on behalf of myself and my whole family, I want to express our appreciation to Anne and Ray Smith for doing so much to improve our old homestead. I wish them the best of success.

Oh Fairfax

by

George Harry Weston
Company A, Maryland Volunteers
August 26, 1861

This poem is published courtesy of the Special Collections Department of Duke University Library, Durham, North Carolina. Written in the author's Diary volume 1, July 28-August 27, 1861, pages 62-70.

Fairfax were I a poet I fain would Sing to thee:
Hail Fairfax County Land of Spruce & Pine
No common dales, or wooded Hills are thine
No flowering shrub, no scented rose,
Naught that the Senses calls sweet here repose.
That man may thrive, tis not for thee to yield
The yearly products of the teeming field
Beneath the axe, to see the forest bow
Or bare thy bosom to the scarring plow
In years gone by the Sage historians say
Upon thy Hills the Indian held his sway
Wore out his stores & vainly tried
To scratch a living till he starved & died
Methinks I see him now his noble form
Drawn out in bold recline beneath yon thorn
His faithful Squaw, with feeble hand & Slow
Is stroking his feint locks, with looks of woe
Points with her finger to their Starving boy
Hands him his quiver then with looks of Joy
Tells him in yonder pine the deer still roam
Go—Sachem go! & bring the venison home

Alas why sits he still does he not feel
That from his trusty dart must come their meal
That since the days of Adam God decreed
That man must work, if he expects to feed.
In vain the plea, 'tho first by hunger bow'd
Despair has made him mad, he thinks aloud
Behold he cried, with stern determined face
This barren soil, this God-forsaken place
Year after year with legs & ankles bare
I followed up the deer & fought the bear
Me! never hunt again the red-man cried
He keeps his word & so he starved & died.
Next came the white man on with rapid pace
He cleared the woods & tried to till the place
He stuck the shovel in but found no soil
No mighty harvest to reward his toil
When seed time came he placed them in the ground
With patience sat & let the time roll round
When starved & grissled (?) he told his friends around
The seed he planted straight had all grown upside down
Poor Fairfax County—land of rocks & Pine
Tis sad indeed to sing such fate as thine
Nature endowed thy sisters with a loving grace
When thou wast born the world wore a scowling face
As seasons rolled their ever ranging course
And winter robed thy hills with glistening frost
The white man's nose grown sharp from want & cold
Began to smell for some more fattening hole
His wife & child his axe & plow & cot
He gathered up—took one last look & Got
But years rolled around great changes must take place
The British Lion's paw is off the Yankee place
The driving iron horse cannot be held by locks
And Fairfax County yields a path e'en through her rocks.
Along the line within thy muddy ruts
The Sons of Erin built their wooden huts
Fed on the nuts that in thy swamps abound
And drank the pine top whiskey sold around
And they were happy then to clothe their Skins
By selling hazlenuts and chinckapins
To save enough from out their little store
To Keep on drinking Whiskey more & more.

Tis well that on thy sacred soil
These few poor Paddies rested from their toil
For now the storm of civil strife has lowered
And devastating, sweeps along our Southern board
And soon Oh Fairfax on thy barren sod
The Yankees roam where men so seldom trod
The angry Southern with his iron force
At Proud Manassa blocks his onward course
And thou Oh Fairfax thou hast gained the day
For on thy soil e'en Yankees could not stay
They seized the Irishman & made him sell
His Pinetop whiskey warrented to Kill
Gave him his price \$2 by the quart
Girded their armour on & drunken, fought
Thou knowest well how very few that night
E'en stopped to say "good by" whilst on their flight
Thy arms with "pine top" welcomed them before
Now showed them out & shut behind the door
Our Southern army stopping in the chase
Have pitched their tents to try thy barren waste
In times to come some worthier hand than mine
May show the spot where sleep those left behind
Farewell Oh Fairfax when in after years
Some other Indians hunt for other deers
Some other white man grubs amongst thy stones
Or Yankees come to seek their brothers bones
Think how a soldier, sick & starved & sore
Turned poet in thy praise & wrote no more

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